

TO THE READER

KINDLY use this book very carefully. If the book is disfigured or marked or written on while in your possession the book will have to be replaced by a new copy or paid for. In case the book be a volume of set of which single volumes are not available the price of the whole set will be realized.

Checked
1976

Checked

11181

AMARSINGH COLLEGE



Library

Class No. 940.51

Book No. G23E

Acc. No. 2693 ✓

85

***Europe's
Dance
of
Death***



BY G. T. GARRATT
MUSSOLINI'S ROMAN EMPIRE
GIBRALTAR AND THE MEDITERRANEAN
LORD BROUGHAM
THE SHADOW OF THE SWASTIKA
ETC.

EDITED BY G. T. GARRATT
THE LEGACY OF INDIA

WITH EDWARD THOMPSON
THE RISE AND FULFILMENT OF
BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

Comp
H-4647

G. T. GARRATT

Europe's

Dance

of

Death

LONDON
GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN

940.51

G1 23 E

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1940

*Published in the U.S.A.
under the title
"What has Happened to
Europe?"*

Acc. no: 9609
2693

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
in 12-Point Fournier Type
BY UNWIN BROTHERS LIMITED
WOKING

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PART ONE	
1. <i>Backgrounds</i>	11
2. <i>Europe in the Nineteenth Century</i>	30
3. <i>Prelude to 1914</i>	55
4. <i>The 1914 War</i>	88
PART TWO	
1. <i>Post-War Democracy in Britain</i>	113
2. <i>Democracy in France</i>	143
3. <i>Collapse of German Democracy</i>	170
PART THREE	
1. <i>Italy Starts Aggression</i>	205
2. <i>Germany Follows Suit</i>	234
3. <i>Hitler Becomes Napoleonic</i>	262
4. <i>The War</i>	292
5. <i>The World and the War</i>	311
<i>Index</i>	327

LIST OF MAPS

	PAGE
1. <i>Europe before 1878</i>	33
2. <i>Europe before 1914</i>	67
3. <i>Europe after Versailles</i>	95
4. <i>N.E. Africa and Abyssinia</i>	213
5. <i>Spanish Peninsula and Morocco</i>	245
6. <i>Czechoslovakia and surrounding countries prior to the Munich settlement</i>	271

PART ONE

Backgrounds

This book is an attempt to show why Europe has drifted into two major wars within a generation, and why such principles as democracy and freedom have failed to prevent a general collapse of civilization in the Continent which had once led the world. It is impossible for anyone to make an impartial survey, especially of the events of the last four years, and I feel great diffidence about writing of a situation when nothing remains *in situ*, when every week some new and strange patterns are being shaken out in the European kaleidoscope.

A still greater deterrent was the practical difficulty of writing honestly and intelligently in war-time. For some time I have been striving to warn my countrymen of the fate which seemed to be approaching. Together with some of my friends I have been attacked for writing what may be called 'contemporary history.' Our justification was that we were, for the most part, describing events of which we had some first-hand knowledge, events about which it was the aim of various Governments to distort or suppress all information. It seemed to be our duty to attempt a compromise between the day-to-day survey, which is all that the journalist can offer, and the balanced work of the historian, who writes of events which are finished, and of movements which he cannot hope to influence.

Like Cassandra we made our forecasts, and were generally voted an infernal nuisance. Unlike Cassandra we did

Europe's Dance of Death

not depend upon inspiration. Our methods, so far as they were successful, resembled those of Sherlock Holmes. He would always make his own investigations on the spot—you may remember the few unhappy occasions when Dr. Watson was sent to deputize for him. Holmes was often called in to exculpate an innocent accused. He would then look about for those small 'pointers' which showed that the obvious and generally accepted theory could not possibly be correct. We were often in the same position of having to disprove the official explanations. Holmes would never rule out any theory, which fitted in with the facts, merely because it incriminated some respectable member of society. We also found that the same methods, applied to foreign affairs, did not make for popularity with the 'powers that be,' but they were often surprisingly successful.

The Cassandra club finished up with a *tour de force*. Some weeks before March 15, 1939, we gave that ill-omened day as the probable date on which Herr Hitler would march into Czecho-Slovakia. It was not a very difficult forecast to make—from Prague. It was completely unheeded in England. Even the Press thought it too specific to be taken seriously. Mr. Chamberlain made an extremely optimistic speech in the first week of March. The attitude of the comfortable classes in England was, as usual, well illustrated by *Punch*, which, on March 15th, published a cartoon showing John Bull waking up cheerfully after a nightmare produced by the gloomy forebodings of irresponsible prophets.

Since that date European politics have ceased to be a field for the private investigator. Travel became increasingly difficult, and for the English it stopped when war was declared. In every country the censor and the policeman got busily to work. The kind of information upon which it is possible to form an opinion, or to make a forecast, the little facts which Governments hide away, the news which the

Backgrounds

papers will not publish, these are no longer available. Perhaps some may be garnered by the admirable correspondent whom America sends to Europe, some may be collected by writers in neutral countries, but members of the belligerent states are cut off from all real information. Anyone with leisure and inclination can amuse himself conjecturing the future course of the war, or suggesting some new groupings of the Powers, but it is mere guesswork. There are too many imponderables and too little real evidence. Already we hear much vague talk, especially about Russia's part in the war. Most of this may best be described as news 'straight from the leg of the table.' It would only be valuable if it had been obtained by listening to secret negotiations.

Cassandra's occupation is gone. She can stand on the wall watching the battle from afar, or can get busy keeping Hector's buttons clean. While the war goes on I shall certainly not venture to predict its course. At first, therefore, I reacted strongly against the idea of writing a book about the causes of the war. I was not exactly cleaning Hector's buttons, but I was waiting, like so many of my contemporaries, for the telegram or the buff envelope which calls up the elderly man on the reserve. In the meantime I was spasmodically engaged in those rather futile jobs which occupy so much of a civilian's time in a modern war. What was the good of beginning a book which might never be completed? What, and this was far more important, what could an Englishman, living under the shadow of a strict censorship, write which would interest the far better informed reader in a neutral country?

Then I remembered the last war—the long delays and the uncertainty, the 'mud and muddle' inseparable from the task of collecting and training an army, the long periods of boredom, interspersed with occasional excitement, which

Europe's Dance of Death

make up the war itself. From a purely selfish point of view I thought that it might help me to keep a more sane and balanced outlook if I put down on paper some of the ideas and memories acquired during these latter years. The last quarter of a century—half the lifetime of a man of fifty—have been, for most thinking Englishmen, a period of almost continual mental discomfort. We had been brought up to look upon Europe, or at least Western Europe, as sharing with North America the leadership of the civilized world. To-day there is no question of European leadership. We have shown ourselves totally incapable of living at peace, or even of observing those elementary laws of decency which are respected by the most backward peoples. There have been two major wars in a generation, and between those wars some years of uneasy peace and then a period of such rapidly increasing degradation that the outbreak of the second war came as a general relief.

At the end of the nineteenth century Turkey used to be called the Sick Man of Europe. The Great Powers hung about the death-bed of the patient who would never die. It is possible that this helped to spread the disease. Europe herself is now qualifying to be the Sick Man of the civilized world.

Our forefathers used to attach great importance to 'last words' and 'dying declarations.' We no longer pay much attention to such death-bed utterances, nor do we encourage men to make speeches from the gallows, in the old Tyburn tradition. Perhaps, however, the fact that the world I know is tumbling about my ears may make it easier to speak freely, and to write without those inhibitions and restraints which custom imposes upon us. This must be my justification for putting down my views at this juncture, and addressing them to those in other countries who may themselves have dangerous and difficult days ahead.

Backgrounds

The idea of a sane and civilized world opinion looms very large in the minds of middle-aged Englishmen brought up in the old liberal tradition. They feel a little like a group of ancient and retired gladiators, rather stiff in the joints, who have been sent out again to fight. They have not much stomach for the fray, but are resigned to their fate, for life has not been too cheerful lately, and perhaps they have outlived their usefulness. They look up at the spectators in the galleries, and salute them. They do not expect, nor do they desire that other countries should be drawn into the war but they do look to like-minded people to carry on the traditions of personal freedom and human dignity which they know to be endangered. The weaknesses, the selfishness and the divided loyalties which have ruined England and thus brought us back into the arena, these are faults not likely to be expiated in the present war. In handing over the torch for safe keeping it may be right to explain, though it will be impossible to justify, the events and policies which led to the catastrophe.

Most people who write, and who take their task at all seriously, are afflicted by an occasional nightmare. They see themselves as organists, playing upon an instrument in which all the controls have gone wrong. Words are such kittle cattle. They are a lamentable medium in which to work when compared with colour, notes, or shapes in stone and clay. At no time is this difficulty more apparent than when talking of foreign countries, or when explaining English institutions, customs and ideas to people abroad. Every word is a key which opens up a room. It may be a little gallery of pictures, it may be a lumber-room full of memories, often dusty, untidy and half-forgotten. A writer uses a word as an organist may press down a note, but he has far less certainty about the impression which he will make. That is why—if 'we'd see truth dawn together'—it

Europe's Dance of Death

is necessary to know something of the writer's own background, and why I may, perhaps, be excused for an extremely egotistical first chapter.

Take any 'key word,' such as must appear frequently in this book—for example *Germany*. This opens up for me a largish gallery, which contains a number of pictures and a great mass of lumber—political history now rather out of date, scraps of information not too well collated, a little knowledge of German language, literature and music. It is not a room of which I am very proud. My readers will probably have theirs tidier and better stocked. The point is that their rooms are bound to be quite differently furnished. We may take a glance round mine, which contains a good deal of rubbish, and a few interesting pictures.

The first picture is banal enough. Berlin in 1911—as seen by an undergraduate. A provincial city just aspiring to become a Weltstadt. Everything clean, orderly and fairly prosperous. A paradise for the lower middle classes, who could enjoy good music, good food, cheap travel. In the foreground, Unter den Linden, and the Kaiser in his wonderful new car, tinkling his way through that holy of holies, the centre of the Brandenburg Tor. There is the Café des Westens, as Rupert Brooke knew it, where

Temperamentvoll *German Jews*
Drink beer around.

Theatres, with their surprising fondness for the plays of Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw. The opera, then such a luxury in England, so accessible and cheap. In the background, however, we can see the gathering thunder-clouds. The price of middle-class contentment was a free hand for the army. Already its efficiency, its truculence, and its strength were sufficiently obvious to the foreigner.

Next to this comes a vignette. Walking through Austrian

Backgrounds

Tyrol on the way to India, two years later. A happy memory of decent quiet country folk living in marvellous scenery, a memory of friendly evenings in little mountain inns, of an almost embarrassing friendliness. It is not pleasant to think that one can never again see the original of this picture, for an absurd racial theory has torn these peasants up by the roots, and planted them again, the Lord knows where.

The war period added little to this gallery. I was on an eastern front, our enemy were Turks, and the war was one which left no strong feelings behind. Mesopotamia was perhaps the last of the old-fashioned wars, fought chiefly by professionals, and preserving most of the minor decencies. The only Germans we saw were a few officers, captured along with some Turkish prisoners. They were glum, haughty men, obviously hating their ragged but far more cheerful companions.

After the war comes a series of pictures of Germany in the early 'twenties'—as seen by a newspaper correspondent. The Kapp *putsch* which failed—machine guns in action near the Reichstag, and a mob which was badly led, but still so law-abiding that it obeyed the notices to keep off the grass. The inflation period, when money was so easily made and lost, and the dangerous word *Schieber* began to be heard too often. A sketch of the White Russians, who ran so many restaurants and brought an eastern and exotic atmosphere into the gloomy and sullen town. A picture of November, with continual processions of working men, marching with military precision through dark, wet streets, always protesting against something—against rising prices, against profiteers, against political murders. Then there were visits to North Berlin, and an insight into extreme poverty hidden behind the façade of great barrack-like buildings. Here is a group of trade union leaders at Engel Ufer. Pleasant, conscientious but rather ineffective men. Next President Ebert,

Europe's Dance of Death

the saddler, giving a Bier Abend to the foreign Press. The first overt signs of anti-semitism, with the Junker Press still howling about the betrayal of Germany by the Jews, the legend of the *Dolchstich*, the stab in the back. Then the murder of Rathenau. The hero-worship of the young officers who shot an old man in cold blood, and blew out the best brain in Germany. Once more the mile-long processions of silent protesting workmen, trudging through the darkening streets.

Political 'dramas' usually leave me unmoved. Exciting 'moments' in public assemblies are like the 'Grand Guignol' plays in which the creaking of the dramatic machinery ruins the effect, and makes me want to laugh. I have, however, one picture of a Reichstag meeting to which I must draw your attention. It was not only exciting in itself, but also symptomatic of much that will be discussed in this book. Dr. Wirth, after Rathenau's murder, rising to denounce the Conservatives who had abetted or connived at the crime. *Der Feind steht rechts*. I can remember the fat, coarse-looking men, moving uneasily in their seats, men so like Sir Timothy Taper and Captain Tadpole in our own House of Commons, so like their counterparts in the French Chamber.

Later comes a gap, filled with dusty lumber, all political stuff dimly remembered at second-hand. The Germany of Stresemann, and then of Brüning, of the Dawes loan and the 'Young Plan,' memories of opportunities lost by England and France, and then Hitler's rise, cunningly assisted by Conservatives like von Papen, von Schleicher, and others. We shall have to try and straighten out some of our ideas of this period because in all our minds it has been confused by much pro-Nazi propaganda, poured out all over the world since 1933.

Only a few pictures remain from the later Hitler period. Chance took me to Berlin in June 1934, at the time of the

Backgrounds

great 'purge.' I can recall the groups of puzzled Germans in the Wilhelmstrasse, waiting for the return of Hitler after he had murdered his friend Röhm, the Sunday papers sold in the streets, with their incredibly filthy attacks upon the morals of the men who had been Hitler's friends and supporters and were now dead. An afternoon spent sailing at Wannsee, within a few hundred yards of the villa where General von Schleicher and his wife were being shot in cold blood by a handful of Nazi adolescents.

There would be much more in this room, marked 'Germany,' if one began to peer about, to search in odd corners, but perhaps this has been enough to show what I mean by 'background.' Take your key and open your own 'Germany' room. Probably it will be far better arranged, and possibly fuller. You may have friends and relations in the country. The contents cannot be the same. They must be as individual as those of one's despatch case or wardrobe.

The difficulties due to different mental hinterlands become worse when we have to deal with more abstract ideas. This book is intended to discuss the failure of democratic government in England, and the collapse of freedom in Europe. Yet there are no two words with longer controversial histories than 'democracy' and 'liberty.' They have been argued about since the dawn of civilization. Our memory 'rooms' must be full of all kinds of lumber, of lessons taught to us in our youth, or prejudices acquired when we first found these two conceptions impinging on our private lives, of ideas not fully worked out. We shall all find in our rooms some bits of eighteenth-century furniture, bearing faint traces of French influence, Voltaire and Rousseau, Montesquieu and Diderot. There will be scraps of history, probably not too well remembered, accounts of the American War of Independence, of other wars for freedom. These will include

Europe's Dance of Death

some which, I fear, will have been presented differently on the two sides of the Atlantic.

Perhaps I may be allowed my last egocentric digression, and attempt to explain something of the background which I share with many Englishmen of the professional classes, who are old enough to have completed their education before the 1914 war. (Unfortunately we can no longer speak of 'the last war,' or 'the European war,' or even 'the Great War.' It will have to be 'the 1914 war' as opposed to 'the present war.')

Like most of my contemporaries I was brought up as if I was a disembodied spirit. It is true that I was elaborately coached at cricket and football, but I received no training in any handicraft or trade. When I left Oxford, at the age of twenty-three, I was totally incapable of earning a livelihood in any except an administrative job. Yet this was considered a perfectly normal upbringing for the eleventh child of a country clergyman. England was, in fact, a remarkably safe and orderly country, with a well-defined class system. A certain facility for what our countrymen call 'book learning,' together with some respectable family connections put me definitely into a kind of secondary 'ruling class.' Not the small caste which rules England, but the larger caste which fills the 'learned professions,' and which could, for example, be safely entrusted with the task of ruling India. It was, in fact, to India that I went as a Government official.

It is impossible to understand the European attitude towards democracy and liberty without appreciating the strength of the caste system. So much that is happening to-day can be ascribed to the sudden collapse of this great social framework. Until the present generation only a few wealthy Europeans did not have their lives mapped out for them, their religion settled at their birth, and their choice

Backgrounds

of wives strictly limited. The system was certainly decaying before 1914. It had never had the extreme rigidity of caste in India. The four features of the Hindu system are—marrying within the caste, following the caste occupation, feeding only with caste members, and obeying the caste rules and leaders. It is easy to trace all these four restrictions operating in some form or other throughout most of Europe until well into the present century. They suit a static society, living mostly in villages, and they probably satisfy some natural human instincts. We certainly find a tendency to form new sub-castes in all old caste-ridden societies, even when the religious basis is breaking down, and there is no pressure from above. This is the case in India to-day.

The upheaval of 1914 to 1918 shattered the old caste structure in nearly every country of Europe. Millions of men were taken from their ordinary surroundings, herded together in armies, and loosed from their old communal discipline at a time when the authority of the Catholic and Greek Churches was weakening, when the old aristocracy was losing its pre-eminence and when new revolutionary ideas were in the air. America, which has been peopled by men and women who have deliberately broken away from their old family and communal ties, is hardly conscious of the strength and vitality of the system in the older countries. It had already collapsed, or at least been transformed in the countries of western Europe, except perhaps Spain, and these consequently did not feel the same shock. In the rest of the Continental countries there were great masses of people quite unprepared for their new liberty. A phenomenon has occurred, not unlike recidivism amongst prisoners. 'Who once has eaten from the tin bowl . . .' will always drift back, though his children may be free. Here is probably the reason for the extraordinary ease with which the new totalitarian States have been established. It explains

Europe's Dance of Death

the deification of Hitler, the crude worship of Mussolini. They are supported by millions who have not the least desire to be the captain of their soul and master of their fate. They want someone to follow, someone to admire, someone to assign them their place in the world. A study of the Fascist, Nazi and Communist systems show that the caste structure very soon begins to reappear under new names, just as amongst Indian converts to Christianity one finds Christian Brahmins and Christian outcastes.

There was very little logic or system about caste as it survived in nineteenth-century England. The industrial revolution had effectually killed the idea of sons following their father's calling, except in remote villages. Higher up the social scale birth had become comparatively unimportant, certainly far less important than in contemporary Germany or in eastern Europe. The wealthy had little ultimate difficulty in forcing their way into any circle they might wish to join, though it might take a generation before they were fully accepted. The system had reached that stage when 'class' had really taken the place of 'caste,' when society is still divided into strata but not into cells. These strata were loosely based on money, family or education.

The England of my youth was very class conscious. Village children 'bobbed,' the older men touched their hats to the gentry. I can well remember the scandal, not only amongst the gentry, but also amongst the villagers, when a daughter of the squire married a groom. The discipline was imposed from below as much as from above. Children of all classes were taught by their parents 'to keep themselves to themselves.' A social worker in an industrial town was able to differentiate twelve different 'sub-classes' amongst the employees of a single firm, in each of which groups the parents would have objected to their daughters marrying into a lower one. The Church did its utmost to

Backgrounds

convey the idea that an 'orderly society' was a static society in which everyone remained in his 'order' or station in life.

The Boer War, with its exposure of aristocratic inefficiency, had a markedly disruptive effect. Although most English people accepted the idea of social strata and snobishness was still rampant, the first years of this century were clearly a transition period. The young men of my generation at Oxford cut their wisdom teeth on the works of Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells and writers grouped round the Fabian Society. They laughed when Mr. Lloyd George talked about the 'first of the litter' in connection with our hereditary House of Lords. Some became acutely interested in the slum problem, and studied social questions at settlements like Toynbee Hall. Most of us were vaguely conscious that we were living between two worlds, 'one dead, the other powerless to be born.' Politically those were exciting days, with a revived Liberal party introducing into the Cabinet all sorts of men who quite clearly did not belong to the ruling class. Another portent was the break-away of the Independent Labour Party, and the appearance in Parliament of Keir Hardie in a cloth cap. Behind all this there was also the vague threat of a real war. Haldane, portly and persuasive, came down to Oxford, and lured us into his new territorial army. On the whole it was not a bad time to be young.

Looking back to those days we can recognize certain settled assumptions and convictions, which we had inherited from our Victorian parents. First there was the idea of progress. In those happy days before 1914 we all believed that we were moving towards some definite end. As regards politics the difference between the two parties, Conservatives and Liberals, seemed to be chiefly a matter of speed. We saw democracy as a system, still imperfect, but bound to improve with the spread of education and the enlarge-

Europe's Dance of Death

ment of the franchise. We might scoff at Tennyson's pompous phrase about Liberty—'slowly broadening down from precedent to precedent'—but we genuinely believed that things did develop in that way.

It must be remembered that democracy was not functioning at all badly in England during the first fourteen years of this century. The Liberal Governments, from 1906 onwards, were extremely intelligent—Asquith's Cabinet was far more able than any which has succeeded it—and they were reasonably progressive. Most of the social reforms accomplished during the last twenty years in England have been built on the foundations laid by those Liberal statesmen. The two parties were nearly equal, not only in the electorate, but also as regards finance. This added enormously to the interest and reality of the political game. If most of the rich business men and the landowners were Conservative, the Liberals could count on the 'free trade' interests and the old Whig families. The Nonconformists, then a very powerful body, balanced the conservatism of the Established Church. There is far less incentive to bribe when both sides are equally rich, and it is harder for one party to swamp the country with propaganda. Englishmen could really believe that their vote counted for something, and that they were governing themselves. There was also less cynicism about the machinery of democracy than at any time after 1919. We honestly believed that we had evolved a good method of government, and waited hopefully until backward countries should adopt a modified version of it. We were even considering extending the system to India.

In those days we had a great respect for the law as a bulwark of freedom. On the whole this was justified. Looking back to the years before 1914 Europe seems an astoundingly law-abiding place. It was not only that the individual

Backgrounds

had a wholesome veneration for the administration of justice, but the rulers themselves paid homage to the letter, and usually to the spirit of law. Judges were lions, and in most countries not even the 'lions under the throne' that Francis Bacon would have had them be. The Tsarist Government in Russia, the Austrians in Italy, the Turks in the Balkans all tried to give some legal backing for their repressive measures. The British in India and Ireland kept strictly to the rule of law, however open to criticism the laws might be. It meant that executive action was slower, and on the whole much less severe.

When Alexander II was murdered in 1881 only five plotters were executed, and this was after trial. We need only compare Stalin's wholesale executions without trial after Kirov's death. Up to 1914 we looked upon a system of justice as the first test of a civilized country. It had to be a system to which the humblest individual could appeal. We were brought up on such stories as that of Frederick the Great and the miller, a story which Germany has not remembered. Two famous trials—the Dreyfus case in France and the minor but interesting Archer-Shee case in England—helped to confirm our belief that justice would ultimately prevail, even against the Government. We shared the American insistence upon a system of 'checks and balances' within the Government. The checks were constitutional or moral. In England the unwieldy body of Common Law and constitutional practice takes the place of the American written Constitution, but the effect in both countries is much the same, it gives immense dignity and importance to the Courts.

It is extraordinary how quickly Europe has discarded that reverence for the law which is a tradition going back to Roman times. It is, I believe, true that there has been, during the last three years, far more oppression without

Europe's Dance of Death

possible recourse to the law than there was in the previous three centuries.

Closely connected with this respect for law was the far higher value placed on human life and dignity. Sudden death was not very common. A railway collision or a fatal fall in the hunting field would be the subject of much more talk than is now aroused by a hundred motor accidents. The many 'little wars,' which Great Britain fought in different parts of the world, produced comparatively few casualties. Our losses in the four years of the South African War, though taken very seriously at the time, did nothing to prepare us for the holocausts on the Marne and the Somme. Life suddenly became cheap in August 1914, and has never regained its value. The 'cannon fodder' view of mankind is quite new, and has only extended slowly to the countries which were not involved in the 1914 war. One instance may suffice. At the beginning of the recent struggle in Spain the militia, following an age-long custom, would allow men to withdraw from the battle line in order to take back the corpse of a dead fellow-villager, and bury him in his own *pueblo*. This survival from more spacious times did not fit in with modern warfare, and was soon forbidden. It does, however, suggest an older and better standard of values, which was consistent with the great natural dignity possessed by every Spanish peasant, however poor and illiterate.

It may be worth recalling the case of Napoleon and the Duc d'Enghien. This young man, the last descendant of the House of Condé, was kidnapped from just over the French border, taken to Vincennes and shot. This was Napoleon's reply to a Bourbon plot which had been in course of preparation during the previous autumn and winter of 1803. He could claim that the plot had been organized with British assistance, and that it centred round the restora-

Backgrounds

tion of the Duc, but the execution was carried through without any pretence at legality, without any judicial proceedings. This political assassination, deliberate and cold-blooded but not especially brutal, loomed enormously important in the eyes of contemporaries and also of nineteenth-century historians. The waging of wars and the overthrow of kingdoms, these were understandable and forgivable, but the planning of an individual murder without any judicial sanction stamped the Corsican tyrant as a man who had committed a personal crime which nothing could condone. His advisers whispered cynically that it was worse than a crime, it was a blunder. Napoleon himself hastened to cover his mistake by assuming the title of Emperor, and receiving the consecration of the Pope, but he had, by this single murder, put himself hopelessly wrong with the rest of the civilized world. No single act so determined the English people to go on with the struggle until Napoleon himself was overthrown.

The nineteenth century encouraged the habit of giving definite judgments on the behaviour of individuals and of governments. My generation was brought up to believe in international law, and in the existence of some kind of court of public opinion, a world conscience which could not be continually disregarded. There was probably a good deal of muddled, and also of 'wishful' thinking about this subject. It was certainly true that in those days it was almost impossible for a Government to hide an unpleasant fact for more than a short time. No country cared to exclude the ubiquitous American newspaper correspondent. There has also been a succession of Englishmen—Scawen Blunt, Hyndman, E. D. Morel, Nevinson are obvious examples—who spent much of their lives taking up unpopular causes, and exposing abuses inside and outside the British Empire. The 'Bulgarian atrocities,' certain phases of the Irish

Europe's Dance of Death

struggle, 'red rubber' in the Belgian Congo, the survival of the slave trade, and a host of minor scandals received plenty of publicity, and led to changes of policy if not of heart amongst the Governments which had perpetuated or condoned the abuses. It would have been almost impossible for a Government to draw a cordon round a country, and smother all reliable information, as has been done recently by Italy in Abyssinia, by Germany and Russia in large tracts of Europe.

Englishmen, especially of my generation, have often been placed in a very anomalous position. We are anxious, possibly too anxious, to form part of the world's conscience, yet we are painfully aware that our own country has frequently flouted public opinion. So often British public opinion has been divided, and the opposition has subsequently tried to make amends. Take, for instance, the Boer War—one of many unhappy memories which my country owes to the Conservative Party. Here we were almost unanimously condemned by the world, but this was fully recognized by millions of Englishmen, who agreed with the verdict. Many of Campbell-Bannerman's Government, formed in 1906, had been openly pro-Boer, and they attempted, not unsuccessfully, to undo our mistakes by a settlement which has left a very independent South Africa still part of the Empire, and led many Boers to fight on our side in the 1914 war.

I had a curious reminder of this period when, some two years ago, I wrote a book dealing with Signor Mussolini's imperial ambitions. This annoyed a number of Italians, and I received several abusive letters. Nearly all of these mentioned the Boer War. Why, they asked, had I not protested against this, why had I not opposed the use of 'concentration camps,' why had I not exposed this and that scandal, etc.? Curiously enough I *had* protested. Some early streak

Backgrounds

of sheer cussedness made me, aged about eleven, the only 'pro-Boer' in my preparatory school. My protest got me a black eye, but did not, alas! shake the determination of Mr. Neville Chamberlain's father. There were two interesting points about these letters. Firstly, they assumed—the modern totalitarian assumption—that one must necessarily approve every act of aggression attempted by one's country. Secondly, they showed a detailed knowledge of incidents long forgotten in England. This, however, may have been due to the intensive 'anti-sanctions' propaganda, which was chiefly based upon a recital of former English misdeeds.

This incident may suggest why other countries rather than England will have to save both democracy and the idea of freedom. The legend of British hypocrisy, the widespread belief in our Machiavellian diplomacy, a number of unhappy chapters in our imperial history, these have prevented our taking the leadership in the past.

The old traditions still exist in England, they may even be strengthened in the next few years, but no single country is likely to save civilization. Europe as a whole is grievously sick, and we are a part of Europe. Let us consider the nature of that sickness.

Europe in the Nineteenth Century

Doctors often find that their most trying and difficult patients are the middle-aged men 'who have not known a day's illness for years.' One reason why the sickness of Europe is so dangerous is the abounding self-confidence in her future which was so characteristic of the nineteenth century. Macaulay might picture a New Zealander surveying the ruins of London from a broken arch of London Bridge, but this was looked upon as an amusing fancy, which no one took seriously. Kingdoms would rise and decline, but history like evolution was a slow process, and a fairly steady process. 'Nature never goes by leaps.' The spread of education, the increase in trade, the improvement of machinery, all these spelt progress, with each generation starting where the last ended. Dr. Whitehead, looking back at this time from a world which had learnt that nature seldom moved except by leaps, describes the fundamental mistake of the nineteenth-century European. 'The whole of this tradition is warped by the vicious assumption that each generation will substantially live amid the conditions governing the lives of its fathers and will transmit those conditions to mould the lives of its children. We are living in the first period of human history for which this assumption is false.'

Looking back over European history it is true that the

Europe in the Nineteenth Century

speed of changes, of new inventions, of new ideas, was far more rapid in the nineteenth than in previous centuries. My own father, who was born six years before Queen Victoria's accession, travelled to school in a stage coach, and lived to see London bombed from the air. But until the past thirty or forty years there was always plenty of time for society to adjust itself; for the small class of educated people to recover from the shock of new ideas and absorb them, as they absorbed the theory of evolution; for our economic structure to adapt itself, as it did with much creaking and groaning, to such changes as the need for importing corn from abroad, to the shortage of cotton in the American Civil War, to the development of rival manufacturing countries, to the financing of African and other colonies; for people generally to recover from a series of minor disillusionments, to get used to changes in the balance of power. The English had more grounds for complacency than the other continental Powers—our insularity still counted for much—but taken on the whole there was little to shake the faith of the ordinary western European until the war of 1914. He saw himself as the 'heir of all the ages,' he foresaw his children and his children's children enjoying the benefits of orderly progress, and in most cases he believed that this progress was under divine guidance. He was certain that Europe's constitution was quite strong enough to shake off the effects of any minor ills, or the results of minor indiscretions, such as an occasional revolutionary orgy, a dubious imperialist venture, or internecine quarrel. Europe remained the undoubted leader of the world until the United States, recovering from the Civil War, became a rival, indeed hardly a rival, for her exclusively European population made her seem more like an extension of the European system.

There were, of course, pessimists who talked about organic diseases in the body politic, but they were looked

Europe's Dance of Death

upon as cranks. No serious symptoms had appeared until the twentieth century was well started. Let us have a look at our patient in the days of his health, and his extreme self-confidence. We do not need to go back before the second half of the nineteenth century. The year 1851 will do very well. The Great Exhibition was being opened in London. Its avowed intention was to encourage trade and to inaugurate an era of international peace. The two ideas were, as Tennyson showed, very closely connected.

*O ye the wise who think, the wise who reign,
From growing commerce loose her latest chain,
And let the fair white-wing'd peacemaker fly
To happy havens under all the sky,
And mix the seasons and the golden hours;
Till each man find his own in all men's good,
And all men work in noble brotherhood,
Breaking their mailed fleets, and armed towers . . .*

He could write better verse than that, but these lines, unhappy as they are, undoubtedly expressed what his contemporaries thought about the future. They believed that better trade meant more contentment, and that commerce provided sufficient adventure and rivalry to keep international relations healthy. They saw no reason for any more wars.

Although the Englishman of those times had more than his fair share of complacency and self-righteousness, he had some grounds for his belief that the new and more democratic Europe was getting over her growing pains, and would settle down to steady development. The revolutionary period of 1848 had fizzled out. For thirty-five years the map of Europe had remained almost unchanged. The fate of Napoleon had been so spectacular, the subsequent troubles of France so severe, that there seemed little fear of any

Europe in the Nineteenth Century



EUROPE BEFORE 1878

Europe's Dance of Death

country or individual adventurer disturbing the peace or attempting to gain the hegemony of Europe. Germany had still to be united, Italy to obtain her liberty from the ramshackle Austrian Empire, French politics were in such confusion that many Englishmen, including Palmerston, welcomed the *coup d'état* that brought Napoleon III into power. Europe had never been so totally unprepared for war, its countries so inefficient as fighting units. There was very little imperial feeling. England took little interest in the Empire which she had acquired 'in a fit of absent-mindedness.' Such parts of India as we then held were administered by the East India Company. The 'white colonies' were fully expected to 'drop off when they were ripe.' Holland and Spain had an even feebler hold on their overseas possessions. There was little urge to explore or exploit the vast unknown areas of Africa and Asia. Europe was, in fact, a mosaic of small States and ancient kingdoms. At least three-quarters of the population—then about 260 millions—were small peasants. Race, religion and a caste system which was customary, a feudal system which had survived from more warlike times, these were the factors tending to keep Europe static and peaceful. The small standing armies were decorative rather than practical. Neither their training nor their equipment had seriously advanced since the Napoleonic wars. It all seems a very long time ago, but in 1850 my father was an undergraduate at Oxford, and I do not gather that he thought Englishmen, as apart from their surroundings, had altered very much since.

The hopes of 1851 were, of course, not fulfilled. The next decade saw a European war between the three great Powers, the Indian Mutiny, and the beginning of the great Civil War in America. The two first were, however, on a very small scale. Only a tiny part of the population of

Europe in the Nineteenth Century

England and France fought in the Crimea, and the Mutiny was quelled by a few British and Indian regiments. Europeans were still a long way from regarding the preparation for war as the most important peace-time function of a Government, and still further from the latest phase when it becomes the most important peace-time function of every individual. The 'sixties saw Bismarck's two wars, the first against Austria, the next against France. In these we can recognize certain modern characteristics—a greater ruthlessness in diplomacy, an immense advance in military efficiency, a more national and less professional kind of war. From then onwards we can trace many symptoms of our present *malaise*, and some, at least, of its causes. These may be considered at first without any attempt to assign their relative importance.

The population of Europe began to increase very rapidly. The best estimates show a rise, between 1850 and 1900 of 135 millions, a rise almost double that recorded in the previous half century. This unprecedented expansion was in spite of a large movement to North and South America, which took about forty million Europeans.¹ Here was a silent revolution which affected every town and village on the Continent. This new life, pressing up from underneath, began to break through the old structure of society. The young men and women in the villages pressed heavily on the limited areas of fertile ground, or then forced their way to the towns, and introduced new competitive standards. They were an embarrassment to lazy Governments, an incentive to ambitious rulers. They upset the former balance between countries, bursting the boundaries of old racial groups, and of the States themselves. A quarter of a

¹ See A. M. Carr-Saunders, *World Population*. He gives the population of Europe in millions as 187 in 1800, 266 in 1850, 401 in 1900, and 519 in 1933.

Europe's Dance of Death

million aliens found their way into France between 1872 and 1881. The landless labourer became a feature of continental life, as he had long been of the English industrial system.

Here was a development disruptive of the caste system, which could not absorb these millions, or follow them to their new homes. It was equally fatal to the idea of orderly progress, and free commerce in which we still believed. The necessity for keeping their population employed and out of mischief led inevitably to large standing armies, to intense international competition for industries, to high tariffs and subsidies, and to a demand for more land and opportunities in other parts of the world. We find all these facts at work, moulding German policy from the time of Bismarck onwards. The Chancellor himself was never an enthusiast for colonies. He knew that those which might be available were valueless as an outlet for surplus population, and a weakness in war. But in any country with an increasing pressure on the land the *Lebensraum* theory will always have a strong political appeal, and in the end Bismarck gave way to a clamour from groups interested in the financial aspects of imperialism.

The problem of a rapidly increasing population has, of course, continued till to-day, and it remains one of the great causes of tension between States and races. We must return later to the *Lebensraum* theory in its various crude forms. It is enough, at this stage, to note that the scramble for colonies which began in the 'seventies did nothing to ease the pressure. The whole German colonial Empire prior to 1914 was only able to absorb twenty thousand Europeans in the course of thirty years. This figure has no bearing on Germany's population problem, one way or the other. It is less than the average for one year's immigration of aliens *into* Germany, and less than 1 per cent of the emigration of Germans to

Europe in the Nineteenth Century

America during the same thirty years. The war of 1914 hardly checked the rise in the continental population. The position worsened very rapidly soon after 1918, from the tendency to restrict the flow of Europeans into the United States and other countries. This partially blocked the only outlet which had had any appreciable effect upon the population problem. The other check, the growing popularity of birth control and the 'small family,' has not operated long enough to bring Europe anywhere near a static condition. It has been counterbalanced by better sanitation, and the combined tendencies have chiefly had the effect of increasing the average age.

Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century entered into those first stages of industrial revolution through which England had already passed. In a few continental areas the increasing population was diverted from small workshops to factories, and were being converted from craftsmen and peasants into 'factory hands'. Less obvious but equally important was the development of capitalism. Money and credit accumulated in a few hands, and the new international entrepreneur began to look outside his own country for outlets for his surplus wealth. He was not tied by climate, as he had no need to send out more than a few engineers and foremen and clerks. It was not a question of the 'white-wing'd peacemaker' flying to happy havens, but of Europeans with European machinery going out to make railways in South America, to cut the Suez Canal, to build bridges in Africa, to start jute factories in Calcutta, to open new markets for cotton goods and the cheap metal products of Birmingham, the '*Kram, Tand, Imitation, Novitaten, Galanterie-Scherz-, Mode und Special-artikel*' which Rathenau considered the curse of modern civilization and which certainly did much to pollute the taste and lower the standards of the world.

Europe's Dance of Death

Whatever may have been the general result of this too rapid industrial development, its political effect upon Europe was certainly unfortunate. Herr Hitler likes to portray the Europe of those days as directed by a syndicate of international Jews. It might have been better if there *had* been some form of international control. The development was fiercely competitive not only as between individuals but as between the Governments to which their nationals would always be appealing for help. It was so easy to portray these new enterprises as patriotic ventures giving employment at home and spreading European civilization abroad. The business man began to be prominent in first British and French, and then in German, Dutch and Belgian politics. Sometimes, like Mr. Joseph Chamberlain or Herr Ballin, they would find their way into Cabinets, but more often they were content to spread their influence indirectly, through 'lobbying' and supporting party funds. Governments were continually being asked to protect, first their nationals sent abroad on these enterprises, then the enterprises themselves—the factories, railways, etc.—and finally to help collect the profits from recalcitrant foreigners. It was easy to extend this process to the still more doubtful business of granting loans to semi-bankrupt States and minor autocrats. The Sultans of Morocco, the Shahs of Persia, Ismail Pasha of Egypt, Abdul Hamid 'the Damned' of Turkey, were only some of the irresponsible rulers who pledged their country's revenues and land in order to get money for their own private indulgences. In the case of each of these countries the loans resulted in Governmental interference by England or France, in demands for control of customs, the appointment of financial advisers, and the usual methods by which 'backward' countries are brought under control.

Very little of the capital which was so rapidly accumu-

Europe in the Nineteenth Century

lated was spent deliberately in such a way as to help the settlement of Europeans abroad. Masses of emigrants, mostly from southern Europe, helped to build the railways which were constructed with European capital in North America, but there was no system or forethought about these population movements, which were left to be dealt with by the receiving Governments. Most English politicians still suffered under the delusion that it is enough to give a man a piece of land, and 'settle' him. We now know that if the land is naturally rich uncontrolled settlement will exhaust it, and if it is poor it will exhaust the settlers.

It would be difficult to exaggerate our Victorian confidence in the beneficial working of 'economic laws.' It was associated with a profound belief in 'Providence,' so that the Deity was, in some obscure manner, connected with free trade, the free interchange of labour, the free movement of peoples from one country and another, the free circulation of capital. There was much confused and prejudiced thinking in the Europe of my youth. I can well remember, when I first went out to India as an official, being given a long exposition on the policy of 'keeping the ring.' It was then the accepted doctrine of the Government of India, and it was explained to me by an admirable official of the old school, a man of strong liberal feelings and extreme conscientiousness. The whole duty of Government was to preserve peace, administer the law without fear or favour, and interfere as little as possible with the economic life of the country. If Government undertakings were necessary—as, for example, the irrigation works—then these should be on a business basis, paying their 5 per cent on capital raised. Only an 'act of God,' such as the continued droughts which caused famine, was a sufficient cause for interfering, and this interference should be as short as possible.

Looking back on this period it is easy to see that the

Europe's Dance of Death

special conditions of British development had led to this way of thinking. Our early industrial start, backed by our convenient coal supplies, had given us a lead commercially which made it unnecessary to nurse our infant industries by protection. The surplus of labour naturally encouraged industrialists and the ruling classes generally to desire a free labour pool from which they could draw their employees. The marked individualism of the northern Englishman did not help him to understand or sympathize with the village or caste communism of the eastern races.

My old Indian civilian was no hypocrite. He had had a good Scottish education, studied philosophy and logic, thought clearly and honestly, but his premises were all wrong. Brought up amongst a most self-reliant folk, who believe that 'on the Day of Judgment every herring will hang by its own tail,' he simply could not understand the lamentable effects which might result from assuming that every Indian is the best judge of his own interests. Most accusations of national hypocrisy are unfair. They come from the fact that other people, living in a different country or a different age, find it quite incredible that sensible men should argue from what seems a totally ridiculous basis. We have to guard against attacking the Germans on the same lines as the English have been so often criticized. The modern German has dinned into his not unwilling ears the idea that there is something sacred in *Deutschtum*, and that the Germans can give the world something which no one else can supply, and that race is all-important. There is no hypocrisy about the ugly and menacing structure which they raise on these absurd foundations.

Even in those Victorian days there was talk of superior races, of 'the white man's burden' and similar rather shoddy ideas, but these were not, as far as I can remember, applied as between Europeans. Some of the Balkan peoples may

Europe in the Nineteenth Century

have been considered as 'lesser breeds without the law,' and Russians, like Habakkuk, were held to be *capable de tout*, but until shortly before 1914 we did not hear much about Nordic races or Aryans. People wrote about the 'yellow peril' and 'darkest Africa,' and about 'civilizing missions.' This was natural at a time when the European Powers were carving up most of the world. It was only when international tension became extreme, and in fact well into the twentieth century, that the countries began accusing each other of degeneracy. Houston Chamberlain, Max Nordau and others began writing on this theme. For the most part, however, the approaching collapse of foreign countries was usually ascribed to their laziness or evil habits, and not to their being dolichocephalic when they ought to be brachycephalic or *vice-versa*. The world was, on the whole, a little saner then.

Let us return to the main question. What was happening in Europe from 1850 onward which was likely to lead to the catastrophic conditions of the last twenty-five years? Three factors have been mentioned. The population was increasing at the rate of about three millions a year. A capitalist system was being evolved which necessitated the granting of huge credits to different parts of the world. There was a general belief that 'progress' was connected with the rapid extension of industry, and was furthered by competition. All these factors worked in the same direction. They produced a kind of internal congestion and discomfort which drove some countries into too hasty industrial development and into doubtful ventures abroad, while others fell behind. The difference between standards of living in various parts of Europe was far greater in 1900 than in 1850. This difference was accentuated by another factor, the rapid development of science, of machinery, and of armaments. Although the pure scientists and the medical profession

Europe's Dance of Death

might continue to pool their discoveries, in nearly every other field Europe became a collection of economic units, guarding their secrets and intensely competitive.

The sudden improvement in armaments deserves special consideration. From 1750 to 1850 there had been little change in the effectiveness of lethal weapons. The Napoleonic wars altered military and naval strategy and tactics, but the infantryman with a rifle, the cavalry with swords, and the cannon which hardly reached a mile—these were still the basic units. Regular armies were small, and their activities divorced from the industrial life of the country. The Crimean War, 1854–55, was an old-fashioned business, fought with incredible inefficiency on eighteenth-century lines. The new era began in the next decade with Prussia's two wars. The first, against Austria, was a very rapid affair. Its seven weeks were just sufficient to suggest the Prussian superiority in fire and improvements in transport. These were more apparent in the great struggle with France which began in 1870. In that German victory the new factory and methods of Krupps played a part more decisive than that of any general. At first the chief developments were the use of steel in gun-making, the far greater effectiveness of explosives, and the more delicate mechanism used in heavy artillery. Soldiers and sailors began to think in terms of 6,000-yard ranges, the distance at which ships came into action in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904.

As usual the revolution in armaments was far more rapid than the change in people's mentality, and the professional soldiers were extremely slow to adapt their technique to the new conditions. Two small republics, unsupported by any factories, were able to hold up England for four years at the end of the nineteenth century. South Africa saw the last of the 'horse and rifle' wars, but what used to be known as the 'bow and arrow school' were well ensconced at the

Europe in the Nineteenth Century

War Office in 1914, and took a long time to dislodge. The 'spit and polish' school at the Admiralty also had a very long innings. Only the preliminary symptoms of this great change in military and naval technique were apparent before 1914. The subsequent four years saw developments far greater than in the previous seventy, especially the change from the two-dimensional warfare of men creeping on the surface of the land, or floating on the surface of the sea to the three-dimensional war of aeroplanes and submarines.

Improvements in armaments were only a by-product of the general development in machinery and science which were then revolutionizing commerce and industry. Politicians, statesmen and the people generally were just as slow to adapt society to the new inventions—the greater speed of transport, the invention of labour-saving machinery, the rapid production of utility and luxury goods—as were the admirals and generals to adapt their training to the new weapons with which the scientists and the workshops were providing them. It was, however, only a question of a certain time-lag, there was not the complete failure in adjustment which was to follow 1914. We still believed in progress, and connected it with mechanical efficiency. We did not quite know where the scientists were taking us, but we could digest something of what they gave us. When I say 'we' I mean a comparatively small section of the people, mostly of the professional or 'middle' class. The great bulk of the population, even in western Europe, was still bounded by very narrow horizons. In the Midland village where I lived as a boy, hardly anyone had seen the sea, most of them had never been in a train, and all of them had the most hazy idea of any world outside the small market town which some of them occasionally visited.

Our fervent belief in progress combined with the development of machinery led to the general acceptance of a dan-

Europe's Dance of Death

gerous half-truth, one of those false analogies which are so helpful to ambitious rulers and statesmen. The factory seemed so much more efficient than the workshop, the machine than the craftsman, that we connected size with progress. The small State might survive as an interesting relic, like the blacksmith's shops then disappearing slowly from our villages. The future lay with the large Powers. They could afford to have a Krupps or a Creuzot to supply their armies, to have fleets which would protect their nationals abroad, factories of which the products would be found in all parts of the world, money markets which could conduct those mysterious but far-reaching operations. The old traditional stories of small countries in Europe gaining and holding their independence seemed a little out-moded. William Tell was the hero of a pretty tale, but obviously belonged to the bow and arrow period. The smaller countries might maintain certain standards, as did the older craftsmen, but they were the earthenware pots floating in the same stream as the iron pots. In times of stress they could only hope to survive under the protection of the Great Powers.

The idea that it was degrading to be a citizen of a second-class Power was sedulously taught in Germany, where the efforts of historians and politicians seconded the unification work of Bismarck. The Schleswig-Holstein affair was an object lesson to the smaller European countries. The legal question involved was complicated enough, but the technique employed by Prussia to force the cession of the two Duchies in 1864 was painfully like that used against Czecho-Slovakia seventy-four years later. In both cases the weaker country had the sympathy of all neutral opinion, and a vague and unfulfilled guarantee from England, but this meant nothing against a strong military force on the spot. It is, however, doubtful whether the other Powers would

Europe in the Nineteenth Century

have tolerated the complete extinction of Danish sovereignty and independence without a war. Europe had not yet reached the point when so-called international jurists could argue that no small Power continued to exist except on sufferance, but the glorification of 'size' had already begun, and with it the entirely erroneous view that only the largest States could ensure a decent standard of living to their inhabitants. A kind of collective snobbishness developed amongst the inhabitants of certain Powers. There were 'first-class' Powers, and 'second-class' Powers, and some which seemed hardly worth classifying. The eternal boy which survives in all men encouraged and embittered this infantile competition. It is impossible to read any of the more violently chauvinist German writers of this period, Treitschke or Bernhardi, without recognizing some doubt and jealousy in their hatred of the older Powers. Like the Nazis they protest too much.

A thing that is wholly a sham cannot in this universe of ours endure for ever. It may endure for a day, but its doom is certain; there is no room for it in a world governed by valour, by the will to Power.

The 'thing' is, of course, England. The author might be Hitler but is actually Treitschke, who was also responsible for the famous phrase—'For us there are two alternatives and no third—world domination or ruin, *Weltmacht oder Niedergang*.' We were not accustomed in those days to examine *why* people thought in any particular way, and no one talked about an 'inferiority complex' or studied its working, but this excessive self-assertion was obviously a sign of ill-health in a people who had no reason to suffer from their nerves. Another manifestation in the early days of this century was the German insistence that Berlin was a *Weltstadt* like London and Paris, a fact which no one would have

Europe's Dance of Death

troubled to deny, if the authorities had not been at such pains to advertise it. It would seem that the competition spirit, always dangerous when it develops amongst masses of people, grows rapidly into a rank weed on German soil. Perhaps it would be fairer to say that it grows on parts of German soil, for it was necessary to go into the north and east in order to get the full-blooded aggressive spirit.

The French, infinitely more mature and more subtle, were no more likely than the Germans to fit easily and peaceably into an intensely competitive Europe. In 1851 they were in their most dangerous mood. They were profoundly bored, and longed for an adventure after the dull and undignified experiences of the forty years which followed the downfall of Napoleon. Just as the Germans found in Bismarck a leader who would give them an outlet for their desire to dominate, so the French were prepared to see if Napoleon III could not provide them with the 'glory' which they needed. It was rather a shoddy adventure, and it ended in the tragedy of Sedan, but there must have been many Frenchmen who agreed with the epitaph on the Third Empire—'Well, it's all over, but it was good fun while it lasted.' The Franco-Prussian war left France despoiled of two provinces, and determined to recover both her glory and her lost territory. She entered fiercely into the scramble for colonies in Africa, and found in men like Jules Ferry the statesmen who reflected her mood.

England had been largely but half unwittingly responsible for the intensely competitive spirit of the later nineteenth century. She had early acquired the technique of occupying and administering tropical countries, and had perfected the more subtle methods required for controlling the backward Moslem countries in the Near East. By the time that Germany was united and beginning to feel her feet as a world Power, England had lost that first urge which

Europe in the Nineteenth Century

came from her young and rising population, and the accumulation of wealth obtained when she was really 'the workshop of the world.' Her Empire went on extending, as Empires will, seeking natural frontiers. An interesting example of this was the Russian bogey, so familiar to readers of Anglo-Indian fiction. All through the 'sixties and 'seventies Russia swept southwards through central Asia and Turkestan towards Afghanistan. She was impelled by the same forces which had brought England to the other side of that rugged and mountainous country. There is no evidence that any responsible Russian statesman ever dreamt of invading India, but a strong Power in a barren and backward area is like a heap of water which must spread till it reaches some natural boundary. The dread of Russia which is to be found, for example, in the works of Rudyard Kipling, shows exactly the kind of suspicion and ill-feeling which is bound to arise when rival imperialisms approach each other's confines.

It is impossible to acquit England of a great deal of self-righteousness in the latter days of Queen Victoria's reign. Our attitude towards rival imperialist Powers was often calculated to rouse bitterer ill-feeling than a more grasping and truculent policy. We frequently behaved like the weary Titan bowed with the weight of our responsibilities and appealing for the sympathy of other countries, while we expected the world to remain quite static. At this period we undoubtedly deserved the jibe levelled at us later by Signor Mussolini. 'As soon as the British have sated themselves with colonial conquests, they impudently draw an arbitrary line across the middle of the Recording Angel's book, and then proclaim: "What was right till yesterday is wrong for you to-day."'

The reformed poacher turned gamekeeper is seldom popular in the village inn. He becomes intolerable when he

Europe's Dance of Death

claims the right to return when he will to his old habits. The Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897 might have marked the climax of the British Empire, but the glamour of that celebration seems to have started the weary Titan on a fresh bout of adventure. In the following year England took the Sudan, and in so doing involved herself in the Fashoda incident which so nearly began a war with France. Then followed the far worse and less justifiable war in South Africa.

British historians seldom recognize the importance of the Boer War in recent European history. The long and undignified struggle between a first-class Power and two small and backward republics marked the nadir of British imperialism. It happened to coincide with a series of droughts in India which caused the worst series of famines in a century. The loss of life involved suggested that our colonial administration was as decadent as our army was unprepared. World opinion can seldom have been so united as it was in the condemnation of England during the last years of Queen Victoria's reign. In 1902 England was as isolated as at any time in her history. Her efforts to recover her position led to a new phase of *realpolitik* which formed the immediate prelude to the disastrous period beginning in 1914.

One fact had become clear by the end of the nineteenth century. It has been abundantly confirmed since. *The danger to peace came from the larger and not from the smaller Powers.* For several reasons this point must be emphasized and made clear. By far the most important section of world opinion outside Europe lies in North America, which is the supreme example of a huge area and a large *bloc* of population being united peacefully under a single Government. There is a tendency for Americans to accept without much thought the idea that the bigger the units the less likelihood of war.

Europe in the Nineteenth Century

Also the Great Powers, in all times of stress, put their case before the world, and they usually like to depict themselves as the unhappy victims of circumstances beyond their control, being drawn into disputes due to the innate quarrelsomeness of their smaller and more backward neighbours. Finally, the Balkans and Danubian basin have a bad reputation as providing the starting point for wars, and much of this area is occupied by small countries, backward and full of racial antipathies. The expression 'Balkanization' has come to mean the splitting up of some part of the world into small warring groups. The whole subject has been so 'muddied over' by confused thinking and by the *apologia* of the Great Powers that it is worth some consideration.

Let us look at the map of Europe before the Treaty of Berlin, the Treaty of 1878 which was almost as momentous and as fraught with future difficulties as that of Versailles. Nearly all the small Powers lay to the west. The more northerly ones—Denmark, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland and Scandinavia—were peace-loving States under various forms of democratic government. They were able to settle their differences without any threat of war, and when later Norway decided to separate from Sweden the affair was managed in an admirable spirit. Spain and Portugal remained at peace, and Spain's only wars were of a dynastic nature, and were complicated by interference from France and Germany. Eastwards a recently united Italy hardly yet aspired to be a Great Power, and Greece had enjoyed half a century of independence. Roumania and Servia were semi-independent States inside the Turkish Empire. All the rest of Europe was divided between Turkey and the five Great Powers—France, the new Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia and Great Britain. All the wars fought in the quarter of a century previous to the Treaty of Berlin had been between these Powers. The Crimea in 1854, the Franco-

Europe's Dance of Death

Austrian war of 1859, the Austro-Prussian and the Franco-Prussian wars, and finally the struggle between Russia and Turkey in 1877. Only the second and the last had been complicated by secondary Powers intervening. In 1859 it was Sardinia, and in the Russo-Turkish war the Christian subject races rebelled.

The Treaty of Berlin created a number of new States, or extended old ones—Servia, Roumania, Bulgaria, Roumelia, Montenegro—carved out partly with an eye to the divergent interests of Austria and Russia and partly on ethnological grounds. This was the process of 'Balkanization' which has been so much maligned since. There were many reasons why these new countries were not likely to be model States. The whole of this area is inhabited by the remains of various Asiatic hordes who have migrated into Europe from the east: Scythians, Sarmatians, Bulgars, West Turks, Cumans, Osmanli Turks, Magyars and others. The backward nature of these old fighting races, the existence of Moslem minorities, the old feuds and jealousies all contributed to the confusion. They had as one neighbour Slav Russia, a comparatively homogeneous country; as another Germanic Austria, a multi-national country hard-pressed by the rising strength of Prussia, and tending always to disrupt; to the south was Turkey, even in its decadence a great fighting country, and the natural protector of the Moslem minorities. The Balkan States lay between the two European Powers and the Dardanelles, those narrow straits which have had a kind of magnetic attraction for armies since the days of Troy, and which Russia, as the greatest Black Sea State, will always want to control.

The history of the Near East since 1918 has shown that it is not easy to build stable self-respecting countries in the areas vacated by the Turks, but the Balkan States have not such a bad record, in regard to making war, and those which

Europe in the Nineteenth Century

occurred between the Treaty of Berlin and 1914 were all connected with the continual intrigues of the Great Powers. Russia's attempts to bring Bulgaria under her control led indirectly to the absorption of Roumelia and then to the short war between Bulgaria and Servia in 1885. The unjustifiable annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria in 1908 was the most potent factor in that quarrel with Servia which was, in the end, to provide the immediate cause of the 1914 war. The formation of the Balkan League and the Balkan war against Turkey in 1912 followed upon Italy's seizure of Tripoli. The subsequent internecine struggle between Servia and Greece on the one side, and Bulgaria on the other, in 1913, must be regarded largely as a contest between the pro-Russian and pro-Austrian factions.

Curiously enough, it was a war in which the United States were involved that showed Europe most clearly the relative feebleness of second-class Powers. The complete collapse of Spain meant far more than the emergence across the Atlantic of a new imperialist Power, it meant more than that an old imperial nation had lost its colonies, and that its navy had been inefficient. It proved that countries must either keep up with the Great Power standard, or else wait, as it were, for the scraps which might fall from the masters' table. They ceased to count in world affairs, and it would be suicide for them to assert their rights without support from some other first-class Power. The unfortunate experiences of Great Britain in South Africa suggested that small non-industrial countries might still give a good account of themselves, but England's claim to be a first-class fighting Power had always depended on her navy, which she could not use in the Boer War. Also she was traditionally a long time in collecting an army, and in the end did succeed in winning.

Returning to the general question of Europe's twentieth-

Europe's Dance of Death

century collapse. The patient's previous history in the previous century does not suggest that her sickness was due to the multiplicity of small independent States, but to the intensely competitive spirit which existed between a limited number of countries claiming to be first-class Powers. These competed in armaments, commerce, in large-scale money-lending, in the exploitation of tropical areas, in extending their control over the smaller European and Near Eastern countries. Some of the smaller Powers which had accepted second-class rank, such as Holland, Belgium and Portugal, retained large tropical colonies, but their tenure was really conditional. In the case of the last two their colonial administration amounted to a scandal—the 'red rubber' in the Congo which was exposed by E. D. Morel, and the slavery in Portuguese East Africa which Mr. Nevinson investigated—but no official cognizance of this was taken by the other Powers. On the other hand, both France and England began to act, towards the end of the century, as if these possessions of the smaller Powers were merely held on sufferance. In 1898 Balfour calmly offered to share out Portugal's colonies with Germany, an offer which was refused partly because it could not be made publicly. A few years later, in the course of the Moroccan negotiations, France was ready to give Germany certain concessions, of no real value, in the French Congo on the understanding that these would 'secure her a pre-emption on Belgian Congo'—the presumption being that the transfer could be arranged later. Quite recently it was reported on good authority that Italy, before deciding upon her Abyssinian venture, investigated the possibility of an alternative scheme—the taking of Portuguese East Africa. She appears to have been deterred from this course, which would have given her a far more valuable possession, by the belief that this move would offend South Africa and hence be unacceptable to

Europe in the Nineteenth Century

Great Britain. It is, of course, a comparatively short step from believing that a small Power holds its colonies only by the consent of the Great Powers to accepting the idea that the smaller countries only continue to exist by the kind permission of those Powers.

The growing truculence of the larger Powers was a reflection of the increasing patriotism upon which statesmen of these countries could rely. A few authors, like Romain Rolland, might urge people to be 'good Europeans,' but the general trend was exactly the other way all over the Continent. It was partly a reaction against the unnational feudalism which had survived from the eighteenth century, when the petty monarchs had looked upon their countries as landlords look upon their estates, and had thought little of bartering their subjects in one area for the people in some more convenient district. Over huge tracts of Europe, including most of modern Germany and Italy, the people claimed to have a nationality but certainly did not belong to a nation. The spread of democracy, or at least some form of democracy, led statesmen in the nineteenth century to cultivate the 'patriotism' which their grandfathers had despised.

This is seen very clearly in German history. During the Napoleonic era the Kings of Prussia, Saxony and Bavaria put up little resistance. Goethe, a State official as well as a poet, took no interest in the wars of liberation. He said of Napoleon, 'That fellow is too strong for you, you will never do anything against him.' Lessing was almost as contemptuous of 'patriotism' as was Dr. Johnson, who described it as 'the last refuge of a scoundrel.' The educated Germany of Kant held, like Herder, that 'of all kinds of pride, national pride is the most foolish; it ruined Greece; it ruined Judæa and Rome.' The rising which culminated in the battle of Leipzig was a popular movement, though it had to form itself behind generals as unsympathetic as Blücher and

Europe's Dance of Death

Yorck. It was only gradually that the privileged classes learnt to appreciate the strength of certain racial and local patriotisms dormant amongst their own people. The cleverer leaders began, for their own ends, to encourage and train the growth of what was often a vague and feeble sentiment. This is one of the reasons why democracy, as a system, has proved such a very weak safeguard against war and military ambitions in modern Europe.

Prelude to 1914

In the previous chapter it was suggested that the disease which is now afflicting Europe is due to an unhealthy competitive spirit amongst the larger Powers. We can trace the growth of a Great Power psychosis or mental derangement. A vicious circle was set up inside these countries. The statesmen taught their peoples that it was a special glory and privilege to be citizens of a Great Power. The people pressed the statesmen to prove this by greater activities at the expense of, or at least in competition with, their rivals. The danger is that there is no umpire to decide when the struggle shall come to an end, and the verdict be given to the winner. Normally the arbitrament will be by war.

All the Great Powers were engaged, by the end of the nineteenth century, in some form of competition with one or more of the others. England and Germany were beginning their 'naval race,' France and Germany were busy with their 'military race.' Each of these contests in preparation had reached such a pitch of intensity in the early years of the twentieth century that there was talk of 'naval holidays' and the limitation of land forces, but experience suggests that these agreements to call a halt in a competition are seldom successful except in the face of a common danger from some other source. We shall see how the games of empire-building or land-grabbing, which were proceeding between England and France in Africa, and England and Russia in Asia, were both ended by agreement during the years from

Europe's Dance of Death

1904 and 1907. This 'calling off' was only partly a return to sanity, it was far more the consequence of increasing tension in Europe due to the intransigence of Germany.

A very dangerous symptom of Great Power psychosis is the belief amongst both peoples and their rulers that they are a law unto themselves. We cannot find a better example of this than the events in China, which unhappily but typically ushered in the new century.

European treatment of this ancient home of civilization had been bad enough during the previous sixty years. The English had set a lamentable example in the two 'Opium wars' of 1839 and 1859. The other Occidental Powers followed the trail which the English had blazed, and learnt a dozen ways of forcing their trade upon the cultured and peace-loving Chinese. The threat of war was continually being used. The Government of China had to cede ports, make treaties, submit to trade dictation and give the hated foreigner various 'extra-territorial' rights according to the formula already found so effective in the Near East.

Certain national characteristics prevented the Chinese from saving themselves, as the Japanese did, by imitating the military and naval efficiency of the Western barbarians. One indignity followed another until a great revulsion of feeling swept through the country, and found expression in a natural but ill-judged measure on the part of the Dowager Empress. This remarkable woman, who had risen from the status of a slave and a concubine, decided upon a European massacre, calling in for the purpose the politico-religious movement known to us as the 'Boxers.' The Imperial Rescript was sent out in June 1900. The massacre was only partially carried out, but several Europeans were killed, including the German Minister.

It was natural enough that the Powers should take immediate action. The despatch of a combined expeditionary

Prelude to 1914

force was perhaps inevitable, for the Powers were too jealous to entrust the work to one of their number. The spirit in which this mixed army was sent, its conduct when it reached China give us a good opportunity of studying the mentality of the Powers in one of their few collective activities. From each country the army was sent out as if it was engaged in a crusade for European civilization against the 'yellow peril.' The troops so adjured slaughtered a number of extremely ill-equipped Chinese, and then committed the supreme iniquity of sacking and looting the Peking Summer Palace. It may be worth recalling the famous speech made by the Kaiser to a body of marines who were starting for China. 'You are about to meet a crafty, well-armed, cruel foe; meet him and beat him! Give no quarter! Take no prisoners! Kill him when he falls into your hands. Even as a thousand years ago the Huns under their King Attila made such a name for themselves as still resounds in terror in legend and fable, so make the name of German resound through Chinese history a thousand years from now.'

To some small extent the better conscience of the world was aroused by this orgy of destruction. There were a few gestures of reparation. The United States, for example, devoted her share of the indemnity demanded from China to a fund for Chinese education, and the English later remitted the debt. The symptoms of European disease were not always apparent. They were normally hidden under a veneer of sane reasonableness and decency, but it was a thin veneer always liable to crack under the strain of fear or some new outburst of competitive feeling. We may see this subdued psychosis operating in England during the Boer War. On the whole the English are neither hysterical nor vindictive. They have plenty of failings, but not these two. Nevertheless, under the nervous pressure of

Europe's Dance of Death

a long-drawn-out war, the people generally gave way to hysteria on the relief of Mafeking, and the Government, when the long resistance of the Boers endangered their hold on the country, began resorting to what Campbell Bannerman described as 'methods of frightfulness'. Joseph Chamberlain threatened to go even further and 'use Prussian methods.' The last was a most revealing phrase, which incidentally did much to increase the growing tension between Germany and England. It grossly offended the wise and patient statesman Von Bülow, a man singularly free from that psychosis which so afflicted both the Kaiser and the Permanent Foreign Secretary, Holstein, a man almost as violent and unbalanced as Herr Hitler.

Some of the growing tension between England and Germany during the years immediately following the Boer war must be ascribed to the internal political situation in each country. Bismarck had died in 1898, and, though he had been in retirement for some years, his death seemed to many Germans to mark the end of an era. The lower middle classes, which formed the backbone of the Social Democrats, were far more suspicious of the Kaiser than they had been of the great Chancellor. In order to pass a series of unpopular Naval Bills it was necessary to practise the demagogic arts—the simple technique of all modern dictators.

The people must be both frightened and flattered, and be given an object for their hatred. Although France might remain the hereditary enemy it was better, for many reasons, to concentrate popular feeling against England. Germans could be flattered by picturing England as a decadent country, lacking all the fine Teutonic qualities, and hanging feebly on to an Empire which she had won by guile. The Boer war had shown the wretched state of her army compared with the super-efficiency of the German forces. But it was also necessary to frighten, and England

Prelude to 1914

was accordingly depicted as cunning and venomous, organizing other countries against Germany, and prepared to use her one effective arm—the Navy—to blockade the Fatherland. Certain songs almost sing themselves. The line to be taken by those who were supporting the Junkers and the Kaiser was so obvious that the propaganda was almost too facile. Treitschke, it is true, had died in 1895 but the echo of his fanatical hatred could be heard in every University town, in the *Realschule* as well as in the officers' mess.

On the other side of the North Sea, England was ruled by the Government elected immediately after the Boer War. It might be an interesting study to estimate the amount of harm done to England's reputation by Parliaments returned to Westminster towards the end of a war. The 'Khaki Election' of 1900 was fought on Chamberlain's slogan—'Every seat lost by the Government is a seat won by the Boers.' This proved as successful as 'Hang the Kaiser' in 1919, and the results were equally unhappy. The first consequence was a proposal for a crude form of economic imperialism, a combination of tariffs and imperial preference.

For a century the British Empire had retained a modicum of international goodwill, or perhaps it would be safer to say it had not incurred universal opprobrium, because it had not been formed into a commercially protective unit. There has always been a wealthy section of English business men who have wanted to exploit the Empire in this way, but until very recently the old free trade tradition, combined with an instinctive caution, has prevented the Empire being turned into a closed area for world trade. The Ottawa Agreement followed the collapse of the free trade tradition after 1918, and the crisis election of 1931 which returned a Parliament overwhelmingly dominated by rich business men.

Europe's Dance of Death

It was in the Khaki Parliament, with its high proportion of men who had done well out of the Boer war, that Joseph Chamberlain brought forward his preference policy. In the end it split his own party, and brought back the Liberals, who had been out of office for two decades, but the threat of exclusion added much fuel to the German campaign against England and English imperialism.

Another cause for German exacerbation followed naturally from their own attitude. England, which has hardly ever been so isolated as in the Boer war, was forced to look about for friends. From 1902 onwards Great Britain began to engage in a series of alliances or 'understandings' which can be considered either as the inevitable reply to German threats or as a subtle process of encircling the Central Powers. A more balanced view would be that—in an intensely 'cut-throat' diplomatic atmosphere—the English gained by being more pliable and less truculent than their German rivals. They had learnt many lessons in those four lean years from 1898 to 1902.

The first step taken by England was a sign of her weakness and isolation, but also of her determination to prepare for possible trouble in Europe. The alliance with Japan, concluded in 1902, recognized the extraordinary adaptability of this oriental race which had managed to build up a modern fleet. England, forced to be realist by the German naval threat, knew that she could not retain her superiority in the North Sea, in the Mediterranean and also in the Pacific. The days were over when it was enough to 'send a cruiser' in order to protect her nationals or her interests in any part of the world. Japan was delighted to be received into the magic circle of the great Powers. She set herself to prepare for the war with Russia which was to follow two years later.

The next moves were more important, and far more

Prelude to 1914

surprising. The formation of the Entente with France, which has been a dominant factor in Europe ever since, began under the most inauspicious circumstances. For twenty years France and England had been bitter imperial rivals. As Bismarck had foreseen, the British occupation of Egypt in the eighties had embroiled her with the French, who had successfully carried on a 'policy of pinpricks' to the detriment of English and also of Egyptian interests. The rivalry had extended to every part of the world where the two Powers came into contact. Their agents were busily intriguing against each other all over North Africa and the Near East. There were disputes in Siam, in the New Hebrides, in Newfoundland and in central Africa. The French Government, so anti-clerical in Paris, was willing to subsidize convent schools in any country where they wished to counterbalance British influence. Fashoda was only a single incident in a great contest of bluff and counter-bluff between two countries neither of which was strong enough to risk a war. Because England had won on this occasion, France was the more violently pro-Boer. It was extremely uncomfortable for an Englishman to stay in France at that period, and the newspapers of Paris carried on an Anglophobe campaign much fiercer and more witty than that of the German press.

The new friendship may have been partly due to a reaction against the excesses of that campaign, but essentially it was based on a common fear of Germany. The Agreement was actually founded upon an anti-British intrigue which failed. M. Delcassé had planned to take advantage of England's difficulties in order to pull off a diplomatic coup, and solve the Moroccan question to his satisfaction. The English had for two centuries endeavoured to keep Morocco independent. This was not from any respect for her Government, which was indescribably bad, but because

Europe's Dance of Death

they wanted to prevent any strong Power establishing itself near the Straits of Gibraltar. Their motives were the same as those which led Great Britain to support Turkey, at various periods in the nineteenth century, in order to prevent Russia controlling the Dardanelles.

In 1901 M. Delcassé approached Señor Sagasta with a proposal for a division of Morocco. He offered Spain a northern zone far larger than the one which she was ultimately to obtain. Such divisions of unconquered countries were not uncommon. The pleasant euphemism about 'spheres of influence' was employed to justify a process which was later applied to Persia and Abyssinia. Europe in this case was to be presented with the accomplished fact. Unfortunately for the French they found that Spain, like England, was in a chastened mood. It was only three years since her defeat by the United States. She was in no state to embark upon a new venture which would certainly offend Great Britain, might annoy Germany, and would probably land her in a long colonial war against tribesmen whose fighting qualities she had learnt to respect.

The Spanish refused the offer, and the French then turned to the English, who had been fully aware of the whole intrigue. Such was the queer beginning of a working partnership which has lasted for nearly forty years, and has held for two major wars. Perhaps it was fortunate that such an Agreement should begin without any illusions or any popular sentiment on either side. King Edward did his best to improve the social relations between the two peoples, but the Entente Cordiale in its early stages was like the coalition of two old firms which have been rivals for centuries. Two interests bound them together. The first, as we have said, was fear of Germany. The second was that each had recently absorbed very large areas of land which they wished to consolidate and protect. They were

Prelude to 1914

both approaching the stage of being 'sated' Powers. In spite of her defeat in the Franco-Prussian war, France under the Republic had extended her Empire from one million to twelve million square kilometres, and she had a colonial population of fifty millions. Morocco would round off her African possessions. England's Empire was already becoming painfully unwieldy.

The two veteran Imperial Powers, trained in every branch of their trade, but conscious of considerable weakness at home, decided to give up quarrelling and to begin working together. They were ready to take in Italy and Spain as junior partners, but neither believed that it would be possible to work with Germany, and both were determined to keep her out of the Mediterranean. The Entente in these early days looked southwards towards that 'dolorous tideless midland sea' which was so vital to both countries. There was no hint of the encirclement of Germany until the time, some years later, when Russia, another veteran badly buffeted by fate and by the Japanese, came into the alliance. It is however possible to trace the ultimate alignment of 1914 in some of the early activities of the Entente. For this reason the Moroccan affair is important. Its unedifying details deserve some examination because they show very clearly the structure of Europe in the first years of this century. They are like an X-ray photograph of a patient taken while he was still in apparently good health.

The Entente began with a colonial bargain, part of which was published, part consisted of secret clauses, and part of verbal undertakings. The secret clauses, the existence of which was denied in Parliament, appeared in the press in 1911, seven years later. The terms of the bargain were roughly as follows—a settlement of the various local quarrels, an agreement by the French not to obstruct the English in Egypt, and an undertaking by the English to

Europe's Dance of Death

assist France in her proposed settlement of the Moroccan question. It was arranged—and this was the subject of a separate agreement with Spain—that the northern coast line, opposite Gibraltar, should not fall into the French zone. Part would remain in the so-called 'international zone' of Tangier, and the rest would go to Spain, which already had settlements at Ceuta, Melilla and other ports. The Agreement was signed by Lord Lansdowne and M. Cambon, in April 1904, and the energetic M. Delcassé got busy staging the tragi-comedy, 'The Rape of Morocco.' In this, France was to play the role of executioner, Spain that of interested assistant, and Britain of interested witness.

Germany now decided to take a hand. The Kaiser, adopting his favourite technique, paid a personal visit to Tangier, and assured the Sultan that Germany looked upon him as 'an absolutely independent sovereign.' It was a direct challenge to the Delcassé policy, and it succeeded. The French Foreign Minister had gone too fast and too far for his colleagues. When Germany warned the French Premier that any ultimatum to the Sultan would be considered as a *casus belli*, M. Delcassé resigned. There is no reason to ascribe any high motives to Germany's action, but she was able to appear to the world as the protector of weak nations. Prince von Bülow had won a considerable victory, and he received the congratulations of President Roosevelt 'on having got rid of that unbelievable scamp, M. Delcassé.' The first act ended in universal applause for the Nordic hero who had saved the dusky maiden.

The next act was played at the Algeciras Conference, held almost under the shadow of Gibraltar. This was the first real test of the Anglo-French Agreement. M. Tardieu wrote—'If one wished to define the change that took place, one could say that at Algeciras the Entente passed from a static to a dynamic state. Its force increased from the

Prelude to 1914

speed thereby acquired.' The two Entente representatives, M. Rouvier and Sir Arthur Nicolson co-operated admirably. They were suave, reasonable and patient. The British Foreign Office always works easiest with the Catholic and Latin countries. Italy was won over, partly from her common Mediterranean interests, partly by the Tripartite Agreement of 1906 which gave her a free hand if she ever wanted to avenge Adowa, and take Abyssinia. (This Agreement, as we shall see later, was still in force in 1935.)

The German representatives were clumsy and arrogant. Not only did they fail to hold Italy, but they also alienated the American envoy, Mr. White. In the end Germany was gradually isolated, until she was supported only by Austria and the Moroccan representative. Russia was the first to join the Entente Powers, then Italy and Spain supported France, and finally, after much conscience-searching, America followed them. This was the division when matters at last came to a direct vote. It will be seen that the alignment was almost exactly the same as that which took place eight years later in the war of 1914.

The Treaty which resulted was of the type familiar in imperialist history. While professing to guarantee 'the sovereignty of the Sultan, the integrity of his dominions and economic liberty' it was carefully arranged so that France, in her zone, and Spain in her barren little northern enclave, should be able to destroy any vestige of independence. The second act of the play left France in full possession of the stage.

The third act took place some five years later. France, adopting the usual formula about protecting her nationals, had begun to occupy the zone. Germany made a rather belated gesture by sending a cruiser, the *Panther*, to Agadir for the ostensible purpose of protecting *her* nationals.

It was a curious gesture. Germany, having acquiesced

Europe's Dance of Death

so long in the dismemberment of Morocco, could hardly take a high moral standpoint. Agadir is a tiny port in the south of Morocco at the end of the Sous valley, which the French were not likely to occupy for many years. The sending of the *Panther* in 1911 was probably an experiment to test the solidarity of the Entente. M. Caillaux, the new Premier, was reputed to favour a change of policy, and the union, after seven years, was showing other signs of weakening. The result was interesting. M. Caillaux began to negotiate directly with Prince Bülow. England was not even consulted. The French, possibly looking at the affair from a military rather than a naval point of view, seem to have been ready to give Germany a foothold on the Atlantic coast. The Paris press made as little of the business as it could. It was the English who took the matter seriously. The Liberal Cabinet, usually not the least bellicose, may have believed that England was being double-crossed by the wily French politician, or have thought that his surrender was due to lack of support. Mr. Lloyd George was put up to make the most pugnacious speech of the pre-war era. *The Times* thundered away about secret diplomacy. The protest succeeded. The *Panther* was withdrawn, and the English were invited into the negotiations.

These discussions ended in France ceding some land in central Africa—land which would encourage Germany to make her next colonial demands from the neighbouring Belgian Congo. Nobody worried much about Morocco. The French grumbled continually at the poverty of their new possession, even while they absorbed it. They seem to have felt a grievance against England, and M. Caillaux took a witty revenge by allowing the French Press to publish the secret clauses in the original 1904 Agreement, the secret clauses of which Sir Edward Grey had denied all

Prelude to 1914



EUROPE BEFORE 1914

Europe's Dance of Death

knowledge. This last Act was confused and unsatisfactory, suggesting that the 'tedious brief scene' was only a 'curtain raiser' before the main tragedy.

We must return to the other European countries which aligned themselves with the Entente at Algeciras. Spain got neither profit nor credit from her acquisition. The northern zone is mountainous, barren, and inhabited by a very warlike people. It has proved a continual strain on Spain's resources, and was the scene of several disgraceful defeats when some years later she attempted to subdue the Riff. She remained a third-rate Power occupying a potentially important strategic position. The Entente was content that she should be neutral in the coming war.

Italy, prior to 1914, was treated as a second-class Power. Her position, like that of Spain, made her strategically of great importance. She lies almost athwart the long narrow and dangerous east and west routes through the Mediterranean. For the rest she was a young and untried Power, whose first imperial ventures, inspired by Crispi's premature enthusiasm, had ended disastrously at Adowa. Her relations with France had not been happy. She believed, with some justification, that France had taken more than a fair share for helping her to gain her liberty. She had never been reconciled to the loss of Savoy and Nice, and held that she had been rather meanly tricked over the French occupation of Tunisia. Since 1883 Italy had nominally been a member of the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria. Her desertion of her allies at Algeciras, though only a matter of a vote given round a 'green table,' was therefore significant.

Italy appears to have been won over by an arrangement which, like the Anglo-French Agreement, was partly open, partly a matter of secret understanding. The negotiations were carried on by France, whose relations with Italy have

Prelude to 1914

always been rather cousinly—they are frequently extremely acrimonious, but are never entirely aloof. The open part of the bargain was the Tripartite Agreement of 1906, which has already been mentioned. Italy's reverses in north-east Africa were delicately ignored, and she was assigned an enormous area, including all Abyssinia, as her special sphere of influence in case events—which the three Powers would naturally deplore—should make it necessary for them to interfere in those parts. Of more immediate importance was a secret arrangement offering Italy a free hand in such parts of the North African sea-board as were not already held by England, France or Spain. This, in practice, meant the one Turkish province, that of Tripoli, lying between Egypt and Tunis. In 1911 Italy was to take possession of this huge, but mostly desert area, beginning a war with Turkey which was the direct cause of the Balkan war in the following year. The arrangement is another example of the way in which the larger Powers felt themselves at liberty to dispose of the colonial territories of the weaker Powers.

Russia was the third Power which aligned itself with the Entente at Algeciras. She was then in a mood as chastened as that of England and Spain. We are apt to underestimate the importance of the Russo-Japanese war. Wars are like surgical operations. They often leave behind them all sorts of complications unforeseen by the statesman or the surgeon. Thus the first defeat of a European by an Asiatic Power had its repercussions throughout India and the East. They certainly changed the course of Indian nationalism. The enormous losses suffered at battles like Liao-yang and Mukden introduced an entirely new conception of modern warfare. They were the first examples of modern mass warfare, when the individual counts for nothing, and the scale of the fighting is such that Generals

Europe's Dance of Death

cease to control. Here were two new portents which were to have their reactions in every chancellery in Europe.

The immediate effect of her defeat upon Russia was to bring her into line with the Entente Powers—she had become conscious both of her military weakness, as compared with Germany, and also of the dangerous and unwieldy nature of her imperial commitments. She was, in 1906, engaged in disputes with England covering large parts of Asia. Agents from the two countries were intriguing against each other in Tibet, in Afghanistan, and above all in Persia. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, following the ideas ruling at that time, divided Persia into 'spheres of influence.' The Russian bogey, which had played such a large part in Victorian times, ceased to have any importance in the politics of the Middle East. It was the end of a curious and rather obscure chapter in English imperial history.

This settlement was the prelude for the Russo-French *rapprochement*. Like the Anglo-French entente it was carried through against the general trend of public opinion. Russia had always been unpopular with the English and French Liberals who were only partially appeased by the provision of a Duma in 1905. During the war with Japan the British and French press generally supported the Oriental Power, and there was a great outcry against Russia when her ships, with incredible stupidity, opened fire on trawlers in the North Sea, which they mistook for the Japanese navy. The bringing of Russia into a triple entente was an affair of Governments. Immense efforts were made and large sums expended to popularize Russia in England and France. The Paris press was heavily subsidized, and even the ballet was used to overcome a deep-seated prejudice.

Austria's seizure of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908

Prelude to 1914

settled any doubts which Russia may have had about her general alignment. It roused that sentiment of Slav against German which always lies dormant in eastern Europe. The Slavs were on the side of the Entente in 1914. Their attitude twenty-five years later remains obscure, but the cleavage between the races is one of the great basic factors in Europe.

It seems clear that the formation of an Entente bloc was entirely defensive as against Germany. The various conventions were explicit in regard to their primary object, which was the stabilizing and tidying up of their imperial ventures. They were vague and undefined in respect to action in the case of some future European war. Italy remained, in theory at least, bound to Germany and Austria, though it may have been presumed that she would probably sell her sword and her position to the highest bidder. There were no 'staff talks,' and the threat of war was like some family scandal, never mentioned but never quite forgotten.

The situation inside Germany was puzzling to both the English and the French. The checks and balances of its constitution were confusing. The German people have always been noted for what Madame de Staël called their 'vigorous submissiveness.' The phrase helps to explain their subserviency to the Kaiser, their constitution under which the Chancellor and the Foreign Minister, the General Staff and the Admiralty were not responsible to the Reichstag, their disciplined truculence towards foreigners, and their uncritical acceptance of everything which their rulers told them. It was unfortunate for the future of Europe that none of the Chancellors who succeeded Bismarck had the mental force necessary to control both the Kaiser and the fighting services. Caprivi and Hohenlohe lacked the necessary intelligence. Bülow, who succeeded Hohen-

Europe's Dance of Death

lohe, possessed many great qualities, and he had something of the 'good European' outlook which was so badly needed in the first years of this century. His term of office was, however, largely a struggle against the powerful and malign influence of Baron von Holstein and the flamboyant assertiveness of the Junker faction. When Bülow left in 1909 he was followed by Bethmann-Hollweg, a conscientious nonentity, quite incapable of controlling the bellicose heads of departments, Admiral Tirpitz the director of naval policy and Kiderlen Wächter at the Foreign Office.

Any Englishman, and still more any American, who has lived some time in Germany must have been struck by this fundamental paradox in the German character. Individually the people are so independent and self-respecting, but there are large fields of human activity in which they prefer to allow others to think and act for them. The English perhaps ought to understand it, for we have a class of old domestic servants who combine considerable dignity and independence with a complete acceptance of their status. This was the attitude of the Germans towards those who managed the country's foreign affairs, her army and her navy.

It would therefore be wrong to consider the Germany of those days as a democracy in regard to most of the competitive subjects—armaments, colonial development, interference with smaller countries, and the opening of markets abroad by the use of diplomatic pressure and persuasion. In these matters the Germany of 1910 was as much a dictatorship as it is to-day. The general policy of expansion eastwards, the *Drang nach Osten*, was also very similar to Hitler's policy, but the threat of force was well concealed, and the German emissaries went armed with offers of loans.

Prelude to 1914

Of Germany's pre-war investments, amounting in all to about £1,250 million, not far short of £500,000,000 was invested in Russia, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, Roumania, and Turkey. And by the system of 'peaceful penetration' she gave these countries not only capital, but what they needed hardly less, organization. The whole of Europe east of the Rhine thus fell into the German industrial orbit, and its economic life was adjusted accordingly.¹

To this form of penetration no objection was made. A more contentious subject was the Baghdad railway. One of the pictures which might have been added to my German gallery dates from 1917. Our brigade had been sent round to occupy the railhead when Baghdad was falling. It was the culmination of a long campaign through a completely derelict and almost empty country. Throughout we had hardly seen a building—except the ruins of Ctesiphon—which looked as if it was made to last for more than a few years. Towns like Kut were just collections of hovels made from sundried bricks. Suddenly we saw ahead of us a large iron railway bridge, and behind it a great solid railway station, looking totally incongruous in that flat desert of baked mud. The station itself was not a pleasant memory. The Arabs had slipped in before we arrived, rifled the safes, and slit the throats of the staff. But there was the station, typically German in its strict symmetry, its square efficiency, its concrete strength. Northwards ran the broad gauge line, but only for some fifty miles. At intervals along that track were other stations, all on the same pattern, and most of them without a single human habitation within miles, unless some wandering Bedouins had pitched their blanket tents nearby. It was a

¹ J. M. Keynes, *Economic Consequences of the Peace*.

Europe's Dance of Death

little piece of Germany, the realization of a German dream, but as isolated and absurd as an Indian encampment in the middle of New York.

This was the very apotheosis of the system which is sometimes called, for want of a better name, economic imperialism. For over a decade the *Bagdadbahn* had been the subject of quarrels and intrigues in which diplomatists, bankers and engineers had all taken their part. England, France and Russia had helped to block the scheme in much the same way and for the same reasons which impelled England to oppose the Suez Canal. Just because of that opposition, the railway had assumed a kind of mystical importance in German eyes. The sad and sterile flats of the Tigris valley have always exercised a curious fascination upon politicians. Did not Mr. Lloyd George once talk about the 'overflowing cornbins of Mesopotamia?' But that was after the war, when we were inclined to count the cost of the Mesopotamian expedition, and the sums afterwards spent in Iraq. Before the war it had been Germans, like Dr. Rohrbach, who pictured the Baghdad railway as a golden road, following the track of the crusades, and enabling Germans to make their language and science 'and all the great positive values of our energetic civilization, duties faithfully fulfilled—make them active forces for the regeneration of Turkey by transplanting them into Turkey.'¹

In the end the Baghdad railway, of which the truncated limb had fallen so surprisingly into our hands, did more than anything to bring Turkey into the 1914 war. The negotiations, prolonged and futile, caused the greatest bitterness between the Entente and the Young Turks, who were trying to regenerate their country. Djavid Bey wrote in despair—'We tried to better our relations with England; they talked to us of the Baghdad railway. We tried to

¹ Dr. Paul Rohrbach, *Die Bagdadbahn*.

Prelude to 1914

introduce financial and economic reforms in Turkey; we found before us the Baghdad railway. Every time an occasion arose, the French stirred up the Baghdad Railway question. Even the Russians, notwithstanding the Potsdam Agreement constantly waved in their hands the Baghdad weapon.' When war had once begun it was undoubtedly the existence of the completed, the Anatolian portion of the railway, which persuaded Turkey to throw in her lot with Germany.

The Turks had a legitimate grievance against the Entente Powers for their continual interference. The Germans, however, invited opposition to their scheme by stressing the strategic importance of the new railway in any war against England. From 1906 onwards the British Government was, except for one short interlude, in the hands of the Liberal Party. The Cabinet Ministers were reasonable men with a strong bias towards pacifism. But during the last few years before 1914 the German rulers, and especially the Kaiser himself, grew more and more difficult as the English became more amenable. The 'encirclement' theory was first put forward as a propagandist argument in favour of a greater German navy. The Chancellor Bülow talked of Britain's *Einkreisungspolitik* as early as November, 1906. By the beginning of the war it had grown into a delusion and used to explain every diplomatic defeat, every failure to get exactly what they wanted. It may be worth repeating the Kaiser's famous complaint, in 1914, when he discovered that, contrary to his expectations, England was coming into the war.

So the famous encirclement of Germany has now finally become an accomplished fact, despite every effort of our politicians and diplomatists to prevent it. The net has been suddenly thrown over our heads and England

Europe's Dance of Death

sneeringly reaps the most brilliant success of the purely anti-German world policy, which she has persistently pursued and against which we have shown ourselves helpless as she twists the noose of our political and economic destruction out of our loyalty to Austria, while we squirm isolated in the net. A brilliant achievement which arouses the admiration even of him who is to be destroyed as a result! Edward VII is stronger after his death than I who am still alive!

That way madness lies. Wilhelm's hatred of his lazy, self-indulgent but attractive uncle had driven him into something perilously near 'persecution mania.' Edward had been dead three years. He had never done more than lubricate with a little social tact the ordinary diplomatic machinery. There had been some change in British foreign policy about 1906, but that was due to a change of Government. It had been a change entirely beneficial to Germany, if the small German hierarchy had really desired a settlement. The first series of ententes had been arranged under Conservative auspices. They aimed at removing points of friction, first with France and then with Russia. They were also based on a clear understanding of our weakness *vis-à-vis* Germany. Our huge shapeless Empire straggled across the world, opening a hundred weak spots to a determined enemy.

The Liberals continued the policy, and the Russian agreement was completed under Campbell-Bannerman's Government. The Cabinet was then composed largely of men who had hated the Boer war, and suffered great unpopularity from their attitude. (It was long remembered either against or for Mr. Lloyd George that he had only escaped from an angry crowd at an anti-war meeting by borrowing a policeman's uniform.) They continued the

Prelude to 1914

policy of the triple entente because they believed that general peace was likely to be helped by the regulation of as many disputed points as possible. They certainly wished to extend the same technique to the questions then at issue with Germany.

In 1906 the chief questions were armaments, rival interests in the Near East, and certain German aspirations in South Africa. Of these the first was by far the most important and the most difficult. The Baghdad railway, for all the feeling which it aroused, amounted to little more than semi-commercial competition, and the British objection to a German controlled railway coming down to the Persian Gulf. The South African question turned on the Portuguese colonies. We had, as early as 1898, come to an arrangement—the Angola Agreement—as to what would happen if Portugal abandoned these territories, but we had also guaranteed them. The Germans wanted to be free to jockey or buy Portugal out of Angola. The course of these negotiations was obscure, but they continued right up to the outbreak of war, and had reached a considerable measure of agreement by the summer of 1914. A full power for signing the Baghdad Treaty was actually sent to London on July 22nd, and the South African negotiations were resumed the same month. Both questions were entirely subsidiary to the relations between Germany and England in Europe, and these turned on armaments.

The English, looking at their Empire and their dependence on foreign trade, held that their navy was a defensive arm, their land forces an offensive weapon. They made no attempt to increase the latter, which remained at about the same strength as before the Boer war. It was based on voluntary service, and about a third was on service in India and abroad. The British navy was built for general service all over the world. Germany, on the other hand, had an

Europe's Dance of Death

immensely strong army, raised by compulsory service, and was also building a navy designed entirely for an offensive North Sea unit—*i.e.* it was more heavily armed and had less bunker capacity than ships intended for making longer voyages, a fact which was evident in the war. If there was any doubt about the German navy being intended exclusively for operations against England in the North Sea it was dispelled by the way in which the German higher command explained their growing naval expenditure to their own people.

The English Liberals, pacifist by instinct and engrossed in expensive social schemes, loathed this naval race, and the necessity for building up a North Sea fleet as well as the Mediterranean fleet. From their first year of office they tried to come to terms with Germany on this question. In 1907 the second Peace Conference was held at the Hague. Towards the end of the conference the British delegation offered to build no more ships if other Powers agreed. The offer was like the arrangement reached at the Washington Naval Conference in 1921. It was refused by Germany in a manner which did not encourage the re-opening of negotiations. Later in the year the Kaiser made a personal suggestion when on a visit to England. He showed himself willing to discuss the armament question, and offered to allow England to control the Persian Gulf end of the proposed Baghdad railway. Unfortunately he seems to have acted without consulting his Chancellor. The proposal was negatived by Prince Bülow, and a good chance of an understanding was lost.

In the following year the Kaiser once more made some of his spectacular but unfortunate diplomatic moves. He wrote to the English First Lord of the Admiralty, and followed it up by a talk to the Ambassador in which he affirmed that he would rather go to war than have any foreign Power dictating his naval programme. This is or rather was not the usual way of carrying on foreign affairs,

Prelude to 1914

for it suggested an attempt to approach the people of England as apart from their Government. Then in October there followed the extraordinary incident of the *Daily Telegraph* interview, in which the Kaiser told the British that the majority of Germans wanted a war against England, but that he stood between them, and was England's friend.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the feeling which was aroused, on both sides of the North Sea, by this political *gaffe*. Shortly afterwards England learnt that Germany had anticipated her 1909-10 building programme.

In those days I was an undergraduate at Oxford, with several Liberal connections and friends, in Parliament and out. I can well remember their fury at this double blow, which played into the hands of every chauvinist element in the country. The Conservatives were always apt to accuse Liberals of not keeping up our defences and not being interested in the Empire. They demanded a fleet of heavy ships suitable for North Sea warfare—the so-called Dreadnoughts. The slogan, 'We want eight, and we won't wait' was effective because the challenge was real. The British Government built eighteen Dreadnoughts between 1909 and 1911 as against the German nine.

The situation again grew a little easier, and Bethmann-Hollweg inaugurated his term of office by putting forward his neutrality proposals. Under these either England or Germany would have undertaken to remain neutral if the other was attacked by a third Power. The suggestion did not raise much enthusiasm in England, which at the time was on good terms with France, Russia and Japan, and whose only possible enemy was Germany herself. The Agadir incident deferred any hope of a settlement for another year.

In 1912 Haldane went to Berlin at the Kaiser's invitation. It was perhaps the last hope of avoiding a war, though few people in England saw his mission in that light. Tirpitz put forward his *Novelle* or naval programme, Bethmann-

Europe's Dance of Death

Hollweg renewed his 'neutrality' proposals. The first suggested an increase in the actual strength of the German navy which acted as a spur rather than a curb. The latter contained the same fundamental defect. It would have ended the Entente without any guarantee of peace either to ourselves or France. It was after the failure of the Haldane mission, undertaken by a man as sympathetic towards Germany as any man in England, that a definite stage seems to have been reached in Anglo-German relations. The French and British Governments began to concoct plans for mutual assistance in case of a war, to arrange for the division of their fleets between the North Sea and the Mediterranean, and probably for the sending of an expeditionary force from England.

Hardly anyone in England, outside the Government, took the idea of war seriously, and several Cabinet Ministers were only half convinced. I can remember Lord Roberts' campaign for national service, and the staging of propaganda plays such as *An Englishman's Home*. They did not rouse much interest. I joined the Territorials. We did a fortnight's training each year, and were taught some of the lessons learnt from fighting against the Boers in the open veldt. The lessons did not prove very valuable. The French were far more realist. The middle-aged had memories of the Prussian war, the elderly had taken part in it. Their army had its weaknesses, but it was thoroughly professional. They were not 'Saturday afternoon soldiers.'

The events immediately preceding the war have been the subject of so much tendentious writing that I do not feel inclined to discuss them here. Only a specialist can care to wade through the immense 'documentation'¹ in

¹ An examination of the 'documentation' of the whole period from 1904 to 1914 is to be found in Lowes Dickinson's *The International Anarchy* (George Allen & Unwin, new edn., 1937).

Prelude to 1914

order to measure out the exact proportion of blame which attaches to Berchtold or Isvolsky, to Conrad, Moltke or Sazonov, to Bethmann-Hollweg, Grey or Poincaré. It is interesting that the evidence exists. Public affairs were still carried on with some semblance of order and decency, some show of legal precision. A few verdicts are possible. We know, for example, that the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia was based on certain assumptions which the Austrians knew were not true. There will be little written evidence on which a future historian can base his views about 1939. A spate of talk, wild and whirling words, long distance telephone conversations, summons to envoys who are harangued in private, statements which are promptly denied, treaties and undertakings which do not last a week.

For the purposes of this book we need only consider the general reasons why Europe had got into such a condition that it resembled a disorganized and unprotected powder magazine. A single pistol shot in Sarajevo lit the end of a fuse which no one could stamp upon until it had exploded the whole of Europe. If it had not been that fuse it would have been another.

We seem to have got a long way from such abstractions as 'democracy' and 'freedom.' It may be worth considering how far these functioned during this period. The primary cause of war was the competition between certain countries which had become classified as Great Powers. A number of smaller countries enjoyed an excellent system of popular control over their Governments, and the people were at liberty to discuss, criticize, support or oppose any political, social or economic ideas. This was true of Denmark, Scandinavia, Switzerland, Holland and Belgium. None of these were in the Great Power class. The fact that they had no difficulty in remaining at peace with each other, and that their administration was in many ways a model to the

Europe's Dance of Death

larger states, made no appreciable difference, except that it slightly narrowed the field of battle. It did not prevent the overrunning of one of the countries because of its strategic position. The others, together with the not very democratic Spain, remained neutral.

The large Powers involved in the war were Russia, Austria, Germany, France and Great Britain. Italy and Turkey were then hardly first-class Powers, and the other participants—Bulgaria, Roumania, Portugal, etc.—were definitely small Powers. Looking at this long list there are very few countries whose people had any real control over their foreign policy, or their armaments. Russia had experimented since 1906 with a Duma, but it was frequently dissolved, and all authority remained with a bureaucracy run under a caste system, with a Tsar whose authority depended on his ability to manage that caste. Nicholas II was a man of some intelligence and of excellent intentions. His peace efforts had resulted in the two abortive Hague Conferences, and at times he acted as check on the Kaiser with whom he was on very familiar terms. (The famous 'Willy-Nicky' correspondence is essential to an understanding of Europe before 1914.) Nicholas was unfortunately weak, and surrounded by a Court of which the full absurdity can be best understood by memories of Rasputin. Russia was certainly not a democracy, nor was there any real freedom of political discussion.

Austria-Hungary was an amalgam of different races and languages, not very strictly controlled from the top. There was a good deal of *local* freedom, to which Czech politicians have borne tribute. As a unit engaged in foreign affairs there was very little popular control. There was an extremely powerful military party, led by Conrad von Hoetzendorff, which from 1908 onwards was always pressing the aged and mild-tempered Emperor, Francis

Prelude to 1914

Joseph, to take a more active and aggressive policy in the Balkans. Francis Joseph knew that he had eight million subjects of Serb origin and speech, and he had held his ramshackle Empire together for half a century by moderation and inaction. He was approaching the army point of view by 1914, and the murder of Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo was sufficient to bring him finally over. Only indirectly did 'the voice of the people' affect the course of Austrian policy.

The limitations of German democracy have already been mentioned. The Social Democrats had only begun on that long constitutional struggle whereby the British House of Commons had established control of the fighting services and of general policy by means of voting or not voting supplies. In Turkey the regime of Abdul Hamid had collapsed suddenly, and by 1909 the 'Young Turks' were masters of the state. The new Sultan Mohammed V promised the 'steady and serious application of the constitutional regime.' People in England seriously believed that a new democracy was going to be founded on the Bosphorus.

The hasty disillusionment which followed was a warning to all those who put much reliance upon the acceptance of a democratic formula by the new rulers of a country without any democratic tradition. It was soon clear that 'new presbyter is but old priest writ large.' The Young Turks organized a tyranny over the Christian minorities which was far worse than that of Abdul Hamid because it was methodical and centralized instead of being casual and inefficient. The Balkan wars of 1912 were largely a reaction against a form of government which had much in common with the present regime in Germany.

Democracy in France and in Italy functioned better, and in theory the machinery of popular control was

Europe's Dance of Death

effective enough. In both countries the weakness of democracy was its failure to encourage a reputable and independent type of politician. The French Republic had been founded as the result of national disaster. Many hoped that, in the words of M. Jules Ferry, 'France, delivered from the corruptions of the Empire, had entered into the period of austere virtues.' The Republic, however, was never able to enlist a class of man who would be willing to serve his country for the rather meagre salaries which it was thought fit to provide. Even such a model of the *bourgeois* private virtues as M. Grévy was also a conspicuous example of the politician who used his office as a source of personal profit. Far too many educated Frenchmen refused to take any interest in public life. A large number in all classes would have welcomed a return to autocratic rule. It was only the incompetence and unsuitability of General Boulanger which prevented the permanent establishment of a military dictatorship in the later eighties. From then onwards one public scandal followed another. In the early nineties there were the appalling revelations connected with the Panama Canal fiasco, soon followed by the Dreyfus affair. The lamentable tradition continued right up till 1914, and culminated in the sordid dispute between M. Caillaux and M. Calmette which ended by the former's wife shooting his accuser dead.

The instability and corruption of French politicians had resulted in certain institutions, notably the army and the conduct of Foreign Affairs, tending to be treated as outside party politics. The mass of solid, decent and extremely patriotic Frenchmen may have despaired of producing a more seemly Government, but were determined that the army should, at least, be kept strong. It has always been difficult for the English, who are accustomed to a very direct connection between their politicians and every form

Prelude to 1914

of public activity, to understand the French attitude. English statesmen, who are generally free from at least the meaner forms of public corruption, have never worked easily with their French confrères, although they may have been in full accord with the general feeling of that powerful but illusive entity called French public opinion.

The inferior type of individual, brought into public life by the workings of democracy, is a subject which will be discussed later, when we consider the practical working of the system in Europe. It was a weakness as marked in Italy and, to a lesser extent, in Belgium as in France. The same criticism, the badness of the personnel, does not apply to the democracies in the smaller western Powers which took no part in the 1914 war, nor was it true of England. Asquith's cabinet, which brought England into the war, contained Haldane, Lord Morley, Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Churchill, Sir John Simon, Mr. John Burns, and Sir Edward Grey. Whatever views one may hold about their policies, there is no doubt about their ability, their enthusiasm, and their personal probity. The failure of democratic control in England was chiefly due to our old historic commitments, especially in regard to the Empire. Two instances must be mentioned, because they had a direct bearing on the outbreak of war.

Anyone who cares to work through the letters, the reminiscences, and the later apologia of the German leaders in the war, Ludendorff, Tirpitz, Hindenburg, etc., will find as a frequently recurring theme the belief that India, Egypt and Ireland would prove fatal sources of weakness to England. With regard to the first two, they should have remembered the historic reply of Charles II to his unpopular brother James, when the latter suggested that the King should take greater precautions against assassination—"They will not kill me to make you King."

Europe's Dance of Death

The world is apt to forget that while public opinion, so far as it exists, is generally behind the nationalist politicians it does not always take the latter's pretensions and promises as seriously as do the politicians themselves. The Ulster affair, which boiled up in the summer of 1914, was more immediately serious. It certainly excited people in England far more than the growing tension between Austria and Serbia which was to start the conflict in August. It may be remembered that the Liberal Party was pledged to introduce a Home Rule Bill, and that the Parliament Act which had lately been passed, had made it possible to get such a Bill through the House of Lords without a General Election.

The Ulster volunteers had the support of that small but wealthy and powerful group of right-wing Englishmen who are always prepared to take any risk, to co-operate with any outside Power, if they can defeat their political opponents at home. The Ulster volunteers were armed with German rifles, and there was much talk of preferring German to southern Irish rule. Army officers were threatening to resign. On the other hand the virulent attacks on England which were going on wherever Irishmen congregated, the continual game of 'twisting the lion's tail' in America, confused the minds of many, who, resenting these attacks, were half led to regard the lamentable extravagances of Lord Carson and F. E. Smith as a kind of super-patriotism. It produced a form of deadlock, a sinister foretaste of things to come, to which the English as a whole were not accustomed, and with which they did not know how to cope. The extremer English Conservative, like his counterpart the Prussian Junker, can always be recognized in politics by his continued insistence on physical force as the basis of all authority.

An impartial observer of Europe would have felt, in

Prelude to 1914

1914, that there was singularly little democracy functioning in most of the Great Powers, though there was then, far more than twenty-five years later, still plenty of liberty of thought and speech. The press, except in Russia, was comparatively free. Criminal action against politicians was very rare, and would always be strictly legal. Of the two institutions which are sometimes believed to safeguard peace, freedom of thought and democracy the former could be held to exist in pre-1914 Europe, but the latter, like Christianity, was an experiment which had never been seriously tried over the greater part of the Continent.

2

The 1914 War

The real revolutions take place in people's minds. August 1914 was not just an occasion for rolling up the map of Europe until boundaries should be redrawn, and old quarrels settled. For over four years the war impinged almost daily on the lives of some five hundred million people. The indirect effects of this were more important than the battles of the soldiers, the activities of statesmen, or the imposition of peace terms. They are, however, often underestimated because we cannot calculate the damage done to civilization in the same way as we can add up the millions of casualties, reckon the material losses of combatants, or criticize the altered frontiers and the worth of the newly formed Governments. This chapter will not deal with the wounds which Europe received during those four years so much as with the general injury to the patient's health.

Except in Scandinavia, Holland and Spain there were no large blocks of population which escaped the war. Even in these neutral countries life was so much influenced by events across their borders that traditional modes of thought were profoundly disturbed. Some of the war reactions on Spain will have to be considered later in connection with the recent civil war. The bungled operation to which Europe had to submit was a major operation on the body, and it affected every limb. We can, in the succeeding twenty years, notice certain higher standards of decency, truthful-

The 1914 War

ness and international honesty amongst those neutral countries which were not directly affected, but most of the symptoms which we shall discuss can be found throughout the Continent.

I hope that I shall not be expected to draw up a profit and loss account. Any great disturbance must have certain beneficial results. Some characteristics of the English, their snobbishness, self-satisfaction, and unawareness of those outside their immediate circle, these diminished during the war, and have only partly returned. On the whole I should prefer to say nothing that would encourage the idea, advanced sedulously by so many before 1914 and by all dictators since, that war has a tonic or cleansing effect on a nation. It was not a view shared by many who took part in the war. They would mostly agree with Mr. Siegfried Sassoon:—

The Bishop tells us: 'When the boys come back
They will not be the same; for they'll have fought
In a just cause: they lead the last attack
On Anti-Christ; their comrades' blood has bought
New right to breed an honourable race.
They have challenged Death and dared him face to face.'
'We're none of us the same!' the boys reply.
For George lost both his legs; and Bill's stone blind;
Poor Jim's shot through the lungs and like to die;
And Bert's gone syphilitic; you'll not find
A chap who's served that hasn't found *some* change!
And the Bishop said: 'The ways of God are strange!'

After the war was well over, the traditional groupings of human beings still remained—the group called France, the group called Russia, etc. A certain number of new groups had emerged—Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, Jugo-Slavia, and other rather unstable units. But the make-up of these

Europe's Dance of Death

groups had profoundly altered. The war had killed off eight million of the younger men, had greatly reduced the birth-rate by separating husbands from their wives, and had been responsible for a number of epidemics, and disease due to underfeeding and exposure. In the winter of 1918 that extraordinary phenomenon, the pandemic of influenza, had smitten the whole world, causing far more deaths than the war itself. This spared neither race, age, nor country. It killed half a million in the United States, several million in India and China, and spread through Africa. In Europe it completed the general feeling of misery and uncertainty. 250,000 died in England and Wales, about twice that number in Germany.

After 1918 war conditions continued for several years over most of Central and Eastern Europe. The new frontiers, the general economic upset, the aftermath of the blockade, the destruction of factories and railways, all these and a hundred minor causes caused famine and also great movements of population. Two years after the war was over it was reported that 'the population of the towns in new Austria in 1920 are on the brink of starvation, and if the Entente did not contrive to send food, there will be anarchy or civil war.' I happened to see something of the relief work in the early twenties, and was in Russia at the time of the 1923 famine. Though large-scale relief was planned and sent from the United States, those who took part in this work would agree that such outside help can only touch a small fraction of the populations affected.

Readers of mediaeval history will remember the mass movements of population which took place at certain epochs. Occasionally these would have a religious origin, but nearly always the motive force was economic. Most of the population of south-eastern Europe originated in some great tribal or racial migration. The word seems to have

The 1914 War

gone round that there was food or good land available, or sometimes that there was security from raids, and villages would be deserted while the population trekked towards the new El Dorado. The movements were usually westwards.

The upsetting effect of the war caused a recurrence of these mass migrations. Sometimes the movements seem to have been as blind as those of the lemmings, those queer northern field-mice which from time to time will flock westwards until they drown themselves in the Atlantic. Very little of this migration was orderly though most of it was towards the areas where industry was recovering. France, for example, which finished the war with a smaller population, in spite of a million and a half new citizens in Alsace and Lorraine, received over a million Poles, Italians, and Spaniards in the following five years.

All the mediaeval problems began to arise in new forms. Thirteenth and fourteenth century literature are full of complaints of the new landless worker, the man *deraciné*, torn up by the roots, but not finding any suitable soil in which to plant himself again. These mass migrations into old countries have not the compensatory advantages of those into new countries with undeveloped land and resources. The new countries were closed or too expensive to reach. During this period the United States, which used to take a million Europeans yearly, cut down its quotas first to a half, and by 1925 to under a fifth. The 1914 war, as has already been suggested, ended the old static and semi-mediaeval Europe, but the people in authority were too divided and too distraught to build a new Europe on the ruins of the old.

The breaking down of the caste and feudal systems would not have been a necessarily bad thing in itself, but the too rapid and violent completion of a slow process has led to an unhappy reaction. An American may find it difficult to

Europe's Dance of Death

understand why an eastern European, a Roumanian shall we say, can easily find his feet and enjoy his independence in a new country, but a village of Roumanians, released from their customary controls, behave like sheep without a shepherd in their own country. We must perhaps ascribe the difference to what the Romans called the *genius loci*. The associations of the place still remain, the old quarrels and the old inhibitions continue. Even if the prison doors are open the ruins of the building are standing, and people will shelter in them. The economic storms which swept over post-war Europe, the numerous revolutionary and counter-revolutionary movements did not bring the humbler peasants and simpler working-men back into any static form of society. From a desire for self-protection they tended to become race-conscious. They did not behave as Karl Marx had predicted, and become class-conscious. In some parts of Eastern Europe it is true that the peasants combined to take land which had been deserted or was only feebly held by the old feudal owner. These 'Green Revolutions' led to a further complication. They caused an intense jealousy between townsmen and countrymen. This has been a feature of post-war life throughout the Balkans and the Danubian basin. It was also a disturbing factor in Russia. I visited Moscow in 1923, when Trotski was very much in authority, and Lenin almost in retirement. In those days all criticism of the regime was stifled by the bitterness felt in the city against the surrounding peasantry.

The collapse of the old social system was accompanied by a growing disregard for the Law. This was a direct consequence of the war. No Government, involved in a modern national struggle, can afford to allow independent judges to obstruct the process of regimenting the whole country. As soon as war conditions are in force one function

The 1914 War

of the judiciary ceases. Whenever the judges find themselves in conflict with the Executive some special law or decree is rushed through, usually with retrospective effect. It would be impossible for an Executive to have to wait for a legal decision as to whether some decree is in accordance with the constitution. The result is, however, fatal to the majesty which is supposed to surround the administration of justice.

England was not threatened by invasion, and accordingly took longer than any Continental country to assume those all-embracing powers which degrade the judiciary. It was only by 1916 that the Government had passed enough of those loosely worded laws which institute what is really a licensed tyranny. In September 1939, a far greater control had been enforced before the war had lasted a week.

The subsidiary position of the judges would matter little if it were a temporary affair during a short war. In any case a large proportion of adult men and women are in Government service, and a great deal of bureaucracy is inevitable. But after four years of a world-war Governments do not quickly return to normal conditions. The re-establishment of judicial independence was difficult in England, and only partially achieved. It disappeared for ever over most of the Continent. Gone were the old contacts between the lawyers in different countries, the old recognition of a tradition going back to Roman days. Even in the countries which retained a democratic form of government the judges were distrusted because they tend usually to be reactionary in politics. They failed to make their courts democratic in the sense that rich and poor could plead on a perfect equality. 'The Law Courts are open to all—like the Ritz Hotel.' Much of the judicial animus against left-wing politicians was traced, not unfairly, to an over-high regard for property. An unfortunate civil

Europe's Dance of Death

case, heard in London, destroyed the last vestige of Indian faith in English judicial impartiality—the colour prejudice of Judge and jury being painfully clear.

With lessened respect for the law went also a notable slackening of what may be called customary morality. Most people do not respect their neighbours' property, most officials do not refuse to take bribes merely because they are afraid of prison. Some folk are honest because they are religious, others because of a kind of innate decency. War does not encourage too much nicety in such matters, especially a war which ends in defeat. To many who knew Germany before 1914 the most remarkable post-war change was the corruption amongst officials. No one but a fool would have offered a bribe to an official in 1911. In 1921 it was difficult to get anything done without some illicit transaction of this kind. The Republic never recovered the old tradition, though the evil was getting less in Stresemann's time. It began again with Hitler's regime, and anyone who has worked in connection with the refugee problem must know that the Gestapo is vitiated through and through. It was once said of old Russia that it was a tyranny tempered by assassination. The Gestapo, at least up till September 1939, was a tyranny slightly tempered by bribery.

A war encourages corruption, still more does it promote violence. When anyone talks about the soldier's duty of dying for his country you may put him down at once as a dishonest or a hopelessly sloppy thinker. The soldier's duty is to inflict as much loss as possible on the enemy, and in doing so to avoid being killed himself. Everyone who has been an officer on active service knows that in each new draft there will be some foolish young men who feel it their duty to run unnecessary risks. They soon learn better—if they survive.

The 1914 War



EUROPE AFTER VERSAILLES

Europe's Dance of Death

Modern war is a question of massed and mechanized killing. The soldier, who is seldom a professional, learns to treat as mortal enemies any people described as such by those in authority. It did not matter so much in the old days when the small and mostly professional armies fought out their battles, in something of the spirit of a football match. In the 1914 war huge citizen armies sprawled across Europe and the Near East. Even if the men on each side, men far better educated than the older armies, understood something of the cause of the war, it had become hopelessly complicated within the first year.

We could understand why we were fighting the Germans, and so perhaps could the Indian troops. But the Italians, and the Turks, and the Roumanians and the Bulgarians—it became a feat of memory to know who were enemies and who allies. I turned a machine gun on to the first Turk I ever saw, and not one soldier in a thousand on either side could have explained why Roumania and Bulgaria had chosen as they did.

By the time any long war comes to an end some millions of men have learnt to connect violence with duty, and blind obedience with patriotism. Those who return to defeated countries will usually find their Government in disorder. This was true of all the former Germans, Russians and Austrians as they drifted homewards, often without officers, and without military discipline. It was natural enough for them to imagine that a state of war still continued. They continued to apply war standards of killing and ruthlessness to the service of anyone who could claim some authority, usually some racial or political leader.

The successful adventurers in post-war Europe have all played upon this. The technique of dictatorship includes picking on some country or countries as the permanent

The 1914 War

enemy. I remember having an interview with Trotsky in 1923. The theme running through all he said was that Russia was still at war. It was not a very friendly talk, nor was it clear whether Poland or England or both were the enemy. We have had to coin the phrase 'white wars' for these unilateral wars which dictators persuade their unfortunate subjects are still being waged, and which are made to justify sacrifice at home and the most truculent diplomacy abroad. Everything has been done to give the Nazis as well as the Fascists a war mentality. As the war generation grew old, and young men took their places, it was necessary to preach the most evil doctrine of all, that war is a good thing in itself.

For two or three years after the armistice of 1918 there was little need to invent imaginary wars. Fighting went on intermittently, but with a cruelty far worse than anything that happened in the main war. Germany saw the suppression of the Spartacist movement, the ineffectual Kapp *putsch* and then the appalling butchery of the feeble and juvenile 'Red Army.' Hungary suffered first under Bela Kun and the 'Red Terror,' and then under the far bloodier 'White Terror' instituted by Admiral Horthy. The periodic Russian 'purges' were all completed under martial law. D'Annunzio seized Fiume forcibly for Italy in September 1919. Two years later Mussolini established his dictatorship by force of arms, though this was a comparatively bloodless affair, only marred later by such murders as that of Matteotti. In Ireland a kind of suppressed civil war, with ambushes, reprisals and murders, continued throughout much of the war, and flared up into an even fiercer struggle from 1919 until the truce of July 1921. In 1923 Primo de Rivera established his dictatorship, and this year formally ended the war, because it was not until July that the Treaty of Lausanne settled the long semi-war with Turkey, which

Europe's Dance of Death

had passed through various unhappy phases since the ineffectual Peace of Sèvres in 1920. ✕

These miserable post-war years must be recalled because they show that only a few years elapsed before a new set of troubles, and a new war mentality began with the accession to power of Hitler. I imagine that the American, even more than the Englishman, has got so accustomed to considering peace as a normal state, and war as an occasional misfortune that he finds it difficult to conceive the mentality of people who hold just the opposite view. Yet from one end of Europe to another the ideas of politics and war have become hopelessly confused. In Germany the brutal political murders of Liebknecht, of Rosa Luxemburg, of Kurt Eisner were the work of soldiers believing they were obeying orders. Rathenau was shot by young officers who were considered by many Germans to have done a legitimate and patriotic act.

The English have been extremely free from political murders for centuries, and they find it hard to understand the activities of such a group as the 'Irish Republican Army' which 'declares war' on England, and sends a few civilian Irish to leave explosive bombs in railway luggage depositories. There is, of course, no logic about this extended idea of warfare. The young officers who killed Rathenau, the young Irish who blow up railway porters and casual passengers could only be regarded as spies in the case of a real war. They were living as civilians, out of uniform, in the enemy country. They and their supporters would therefore be liable to be shot on capture.

It is a penalty of being middle-aged that I completed my education in a comparatively quiet world. The prospect of surviving into a period when war is normal, and peace an interlude between wars, is very painful to contemplate. It is not only that war is in itself a cruel and futile business,

The 1914 War

scarcely relieved by flashes of courage. Equally intolerable are the mental coma in which one is expected to live—except during the interludes—and also the effect which war has of unveiling all sorts of unpleasant hidden characteristics which lurk in the minds of nearly every man and woman. We are like a cartridge. A wad holds down the powder, another presses down the shot. War removes those wads, revealing layers of savagery and of dark passions which we hardly suspect. A fortnight on active service is usually sufficient to end any inhibitions about taking life. This is merely the first layer.

A longer period of war, especially of civil war or the pseudo-wars which our dictators affect, seems to remove another layer. It often releases markedly sadistic tendencies. It is impossible to understand Europe without referring to this subject. It would seem that race, or possibly climate have some relation to the form in which deliberate cruelty will show itself. The Slav and the Mediterranean peoples are less averse to taking life than those living in north-west Europe, but it is the latter who, when released from conventional restraints, seem to find pleasure in inflicting pain. We may perhaps compare Spain and Germany in the last two years, say 1937 and 1938. In Spain there were an appalling number of murders on both sides, but I hardly ever heard of deliberate cruelty for cruelty's sake. In Germany, with far less provocation, every concentration camp and the streets of many cities could supply evidence of youngish Nazis finding the keenest enjoyment in beating men and women. Much of this released sadism must be ascribed to the special training undergone by the Nazi youth, but some of it remained as an effect of war conditions. When large numbers of men are herded together, under war or semi-war conditions, certain forms of perversion are inevitable. The subject is unpleasant, but it

Europe's Dance of Death

is useless to discuss the sickness of Europe without mentioning one important symptom. I may perhaps be allowed to quote from the White Paper which was issued by the British Government concerning the treatment of German Jews and other racial or political victims. The writer, Consul-General Smallbones, worked at Frankfurt, where some of the worst excesses were committed.

I have served in Germany for some eight years. I have known the Germans, when I was stationed at Munich in the hour of their humiliation after the war, and I have been at this post since 1932. I flattered myself that I understood the German character, and I have worked for an Anglo-German understanding to the best of my ability. Recent events have revealed to me a facet of the German character which I had not suspected. They seemed to me to have no cruelty in their make-up. They are habitually kind to animals, to children, to the aged and infirm. The explanation of this outbreak of sadistic cruelty may be that sexual perversion, and in particular homo-sexuality, are very prevalent in Germany. It seems to me that mass sexual perversity may offer an explanation for this otherwise inexplicable outbreak.

The 1914 war ended without any civil disturbances of importance in France or Britain, and the usual inhibitions against murder and cruelty reasserted themselves quickly enough in both countries. Another victorious country, Italy, had a revolution, but Mussolini's accession to power was comparatively bloodless. There was none of that added incentive to violence which comes from a recent defeat. We can, however, trace the effects of the war in each of these three countries' dealings with their Empire. Two obvious examples were the activities of the 'Black and Tans' in Ireland, and the Amritsar massacre. I have no

The 1914 War

wish to exculpate my fellow-countrymen on either count but it would be wrong to treat either as a purely civil measure. Certainly General Dyer looked upon the shooting at Jallianwallabagh as the suppression of a rising connected with the Afghan war. I had just come back from Mesopotamia with an Indian regiment, and the Punjab was practically under war conditions. The war psychosis was evident. It showed itself in an unwillingness to consider the war as over, and a kind of compensatory truculence on the part of those Englishmen who had been left in India. The evil effects of this were apparent, not so much in General Dyer's order to fire, as in his failure to look after the wounded. Still more was it evident in the repressive measures which were taken later. The flogging orders and certain degrading punishments inflicted upon the civil population bear a distinct resemblance to the anti-semitic campaign in Germany.

The French bombardment of Damascus, a few years later, was a very close parallel to the Amritsar affair, but for various reasons attracted much less attention. There was the same kind of order given by a soldier who looked upon political demonstrators as war-time enemies, and therefore to be killed. Some years later the Italians showed the persistence of the war psychosis in the appalling cruelty with which they suppressed an Arab rising in Tripoli. The war went on for some years, though it was completely one-sided in relation to arms and equipment.

The fact that a particular group of enemies have got into a position from which they cannot effectively defend themselves or counter-attack would not deter a soldier from taking advantage of their helplessness. There is no room for chivalry in modern war, and if the war psychosis continues into the disturbed period which follows a peace, we must expect those mass slaughterings which have been

Europe's Dance of Death

so frequent in the last twenty years. They are encouraged by the effectiveness of modern weapons. The killer is not brought into such close contact with the killed. He presses a trigger, or pulls a lever to release a bomb. Slitting a throat is a squalid business. It would be difficult to describe it in the ecstatic tones of Signor Mussolini's son watching from above the effect of a bomb dropped on some Abyssinians. 'One group of horsemen gave me the impression of a budding rose unfolding as the bomb fell in their midst and blew them up. It was exceptionally good fun.'

Murder seen through field glasses certainly loses most of its horror. I remember a stupid little incident in Mesopotamia. Our brigade had been detailed to round up an Arab chief, who had been harassing our flank. He had a small mud fort, and we surrounded it at night. I had some machine guns trained on the line of retreat. Unfortunately our birds had flown. When the artillery opened fire at dawn the only person who came out was a grey-beard on a donkey. I was watching him through my glasses, as he kicked his unwilling beast along, when the Brigadier appeared, and asked me why the dickens I had not opened fire. In war-time one does what one is told, and the first burst rolled over the old man and his donkey. The business remained in my memory because it seemed silly and futile, but if I had been forced to go and strangle the old man with my own hands it would probably have haunted me for the rest of my life.

Let us leave this rather gruesome subject. *Homo homini lupus*, man is a wolf to man. War brings out and encourages his wolfishness, and it takes more than a dictated peace to chain the animal up again. In the victorious and in the neutral countries, the release of these primeval feelings was not very obvious. There was a slight rise in the murder rate but this was unimportant. Far more noticeable was the

The 1914 War

complete disillusionment about most of the human institutions which we had grown up to believe were the foundations of civilized life. To take one obvious example, the 1914 war seems to have persuaded everybody in Europe that democracy only functions, if at all, in peace-time. Directly the 1939 war began the machinery of democracy, the holding of elections for Parliament and for local bodies, was stopped at once—in England by agreement between the parties, and in France by law. Hardly a voice was raised in protest either in England or France. Similar arrangements seem to have been made in some of the few neutral countries which are still democracies. All sorts of practical arguments can be used in favour of such an arrangement, but it is not really wise to consider democracy as a machine which can only be taken out in fine weather. There may not be very much fine weather.

Certainly the individual politician cuts a rather poor figure in war time. The Ministers have a hard enough time to retain their position. The 1914 war saw in every combatant country a struggle between the military and naval leaders against the civilians—the ‘frocks’ as Sir Henry Wilson used to call them, when he was more than usually exasperated. The executive officer has, however, a definite job. The ordinary politician, like the preacher, has none. He represents to most people a system which has failed to prevent a war. The whole race of those who try to form public opinion is suspect—the writer perhaps least so, because he does not have to make himself quite such ‘a motley to the view’ as the speaker. But all are tarred with the same brush, their futility is obvious, and they are lucky if they can hide themselves in the fighting forces.

The war of 1914 might have ended in an honourable stalemate. At one time this seemed probable. The major Governments would have then remained intact and function-

Europe's Dance of Death

ing, and the political leaders of Europe might have begun the work of reconstruction in a difficult but not impossible atmosphere. Instead of this there was an Allied victory, which was not quite a victory; an enforced peace settlement which left too much unsettled; a series of violent disturbances in Germany, Austria, Ireland, Italy and elsewhere, which showed that the sword was still considerably more effective than the pen; finally the whole of Europe suffered under the economic upset which caused unemployment and suffering in every country, whether victorious, defeated or neutral. The disillusionment which followed was complete. I doubt whether many people who spent the post-war years in Europe will ever be led away by any political enthusiasm.

The politicians had coined too many pretentious phrases. In the Central Powers they had promised glory and dominion. In the Allied countries they had talked about 'the war to end war,' about 'making the world safe for democracy.' In England they had promised to make our unfortunate island into 'a land fit for heroes.' The post-war European believed nothing, and trusted nobody. He had had four years of propaganda and of unfulfilled promises. The general disappointment is obvious in the literature of this time. Noel Coward's plays reflect the cynical and cold-blooded search for amusement amongst the rich. A host of writers describe the bitterness of the unemployed or under-employed men who had fought in the war. In the defeated countries the people looked about for someone to blame, and often picked on some racial enemy. Anti-semitism had raised its ugly head in Germany within a year or two of the Armistice, and the legend of the betrayal was already nearly established. The peoples of the allied countries were really caught in the same mesh, but having no convenient scapegoat, they either decided that civilization was

The 1914 War

not worth salvaging or pinned feeble hopes on the combined effects of time and the League of Nations.

It was an age at once extremely critical and also uncritical. When forced by circumstances or from sheer *ennui* to believe in somebody the European would comfort himself by thinking 'they are all out for themselves, one's as good as another.' The twenty years of doubtful peace which followed 1918 have accordingly produced a remarkable crop of charlatans, religious as well as political.

In this unhappy atmosphere the old European Liberal tradition just faded away. By Liberals I means the groups, to be found in every country during the nineteenth century, who had opposed personal rule, militarism, and clericalism. In Germany they were Social Democrats, in France the Radical Party, in Spain the Republicans. Their leaders were drawn mostly from the professional classes, or from aristocrats who had reacted against their environment. Their supporters were found chiefly in the middle classes, and it was a weakness of Liberalism that it had never really come to terms with organized labour. In England, France and Germany small parties had already formed on the left of the Liberals, claiming to represent the wage-earning classes. These had, normally, worked with the Liberals until 1914, but for various reasons they tended to break away after the war.

The Liberals had little to offer the disillusioned and tough-minded world. They had believed in orderly progress, in gradually extending franchises, in the rule of law and also in that vague entity, international law, in universal education and in that better understanding between countries which would allow freer trade and the easier exchange of ideas. Some of their ambitions had been fulfilled, but the fulfilment brought little satisfaction. Several countries, including Germany and England, in-

Europe's Dance of Death

stituted what was practically a universal franchise. It was soon clear that these huge electorates were easier to mislead and corrupt. Popular education developed rapidly in the twenties, but it hardly produced the results which were expected, and has certainly not hindered the establishment of dictators. In both Russia and Germany the schoolmaster has played an important part in training a race who will be properly *gleichgestaltet*, all believing what their rulers want them to believe. The last few decades do not suggest that the academic profession is very good at resisting pressure from above, or stemming the tide of some great popular movement.

The new constitutions which sprang into existence after 1918 owed much to Liberal theory, though it cannot be said that the most of the countries have profited by them. Liberals had always tended to prefer the republican to the monarchical system. It was said of Gambetta that 'Republic' was for him a word of magic sound capable of elevating the moral sense and of healing all the ills of humanity. Continental Liberals rather despised those of England for not sharing this enthusiasm. At most they would only allow kings to be figure-heads, carefully limited by constitutional safeguards.

The States which came into being after the peace settlement mostly demanded republics and Presidents—Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania. So did several of the older States, notably Germany, Austria and Greece. Even the Russian revolution of 1917 began as a republican movement, and was hailed as such by Liberals all over the world. If the mere discarding of monarchy could have helped, then Europe would have been entering a golden age.

Unfortunately the formation of a republic does nothing to safeguard democracy in countries where there is no

The 1914 War

democratic tradition. In some cases, as in Turkey, the President may assume dictatorial powers. In other cases the President may allow a *maire de palais* to concentrate all authority in his hands. Hindenburg was no more effective in preventing the rise of Hitler than the King of Italy had been in controlling Mussolini. Over most of the Continent the people did not want kings, but equally they did not like the kind of politician thrown up by a parliamentary system functioning in a country without enough respectable people ready to do public work. The Liberals' stock-in-trade was gone. Millions of people had been given universal suffrage, and were getting more education. They had rid themselves of absolute monarchs, and often of the old feudal system. These achievements were proving to be Dead Sea apples. One bite was enough.

On the whole the Liberals of Europe had been a decent set of people. They had flourished in a quieter and freer world, and had done much to give nineteenth-century Europe its pre-eminence. Their failings had been very human weaknesses, a tendency to wishful thinking, a rather patronizing attitude towards manual workers, an over-confidence in the power of the written word. William James divided mankind into two categories—the 'tough-minded' and the 'tender-minded.' There were always far too many elderly tender-minded men and women in every Liberal organization, too many well-educated people of the comfortable classes, peaceful by instinct and judicial in outlook. Although they were always urging the need for a wider franchise they were not really suited for dealing with great masses of working class men and women. They had been at their best when fighting against the tyranny of a monarchy or an aristocracy. They failed against the new forms of tyranny—the tyranny of wealth or bureau-

Europe's Dance of Death

cracy, and the dictatorship of individuals without any hereditary or aristocratic claims.

The failure has naturally been most marked in countries unaccustomed to democracy, but we shall also have to consider why Liberalism has been so little successful in either England or France, why it has remained strongest in the small north-western democracies and Switzerland, and why over most of the Continent it only survives as a subversive doctrine. Before beginning this examination it will be best to attempt a wider definition of this rather elusive idea.

Three ideas predominate. The first is the rule of law, which implies the superiority of contracts over arbitrary force, and gives each individual certain rights, even against the State. The second is freedom of thought. The individual must be allowed to search for truth in his own way so long as he does not injure his fellow-countrymen. Science, philosophy and research must be international. They should never be monopolies of the State. The third idea is often connected with Christianity, but unfortunately it cannot be said that organized Christianity has been a consistent upholder. The Liberal concedes to individuals and to States the right of existence, apart from their strength and possessions. The duty of all right-minded people in every country is to prevent the powerful State bullying the weaker, the richer classes exploiting the poor, the privileged misusing their position. Obviously these are ideals which we can hardly hope to reach, but in a weak, feeble and human way certain elements in Europe have been fighting for them. These groups of progressive people were lamps which lit up the world. Now these lamps are being extinguished, one by one.

We were accustomed to believe that the best safeguard for liberty was that the great mass of the people, who are

The 1914 War

themselves mostly poor and unprivileged, should have an effective voice in their own governments. Events of the last twenty years have thrown doubts on all our old concepts. We have seen, in all the principal states of Europe, democracy either functioning extremely badly, or ceasing to function at all. In the next three chapters I shall try to show what has happened to democracy in the three countries which are now at war—England, France and Germany. In each of these there is an old tradition of liberty, though not the same tradition.

Perhaps we may end this chapter by recalling what Heine said of the three countries, a century or so ago. An Englishman, he wrote, loves liberty like his wedded wife, a Frenchman loves it like his mistress, a German loves it like his old grandmother. Then he added that the Englishman might some day take his wife to Smithfield, with a rope round her neck, and sell her. The Frenchman may tire of his mistress. The German, thought Heine, would always find a place by the fireside for his old grandmother.

When this was written it was a brilliant forecast, but Heine, alas, did not foresee a great European war, nor the hidden forces such a disturbance would release. Time has also had its effects. The English have never done anything so spectacular as selling their liberty. The marriage has not been dissolved. Heine might see English liberty to-day as an elderly and disillusioned house-wife, fussy about her legal rights, with social ambitions which make her an easy prey for charlatans and adventurers. Her husband, not always strictly faithful to her, could not easily do without her. She has become a habit, even if he sometimes cocks an envious eye at his neighbours who have discarded their liberties with apparent complacency. The Frenchman, after a stormy century and several separations, still retains his mistress. The romance has disappeared, but she satisfies

Europe's Dance of Death

some deep need, and he will always come back to her. Both English and French are agreed that their liberties are a liability in war. The German case is the worst. The exact facts are not yet known. It would seem that owing to family feuds and a shortage of food the grandmother was thrown out of the house, and it is rumoured that—as she was by no means a pure Aryan—some storm-trooper gave her a bang on the head with his *Gummiknuppel*, and she will never recover.

PART TWO

Post-War Democracy in Britain

Unlike many of the Continental countries which have introduced parliamentary systems, Britain, for most of the last two centuries, has had a two-party form of democracy. Tories and Whigs gradually developed into Conservatives and Liberals, each group having certain class interests, and a few very general principles attached to them. From time to time small sections would break off from these main divisions. In the nineteenth century these were often like the Peelites, in a central position, and usually were an army of 'Generals without privates,' politicians who could not fit themselves into either party but had not a great following in the country. A few independent members, like Randolph Churchill's 'Fourth Party,' or the extreme Radicals, would sometimes form themselves on the flanks of the parties. Normally the country would be asked, every few years, to choose between two alternative Ministries under two known leaders.

The system worked fairly well in the 'piping times of peace' which prevailed for most of the hundred years between Waterloo and August 1914. The country did not want too much government, and this was avoided by the elaborate constitutional 'checks and balances.' England was never seriously threatened by invasion, never had to do anything in a great hurry. Most Englishmen distrust political

Europe's Dance of Death

theory, and were content with the very rough division into two camps. Independent and 'freak' candidates have never had much chance, except for a few men, like Labouchere or Bradlaugh, who had a colourful personality which they were able to 'get across' to some constituency where they were well known.

Until the beginning of the twentieth century England avoided one obvious disadvantage of democracy. Both parties believed in 'free trade,' and there was a traditional foreign policy with regard to the Continent. A change of Government did not involve any marked break in our commercial or diplomatic relations with other Powers. Both parties followed the theory of a European 'balance of power.' Both believed in a strong navy, and accepted the policy of a weak volunteer army. The extension of the free trade system to the Empire prevented one great cause of difficulties with other countries.

Another peculiarity of English political life differentiated her from France and Germany, though not from the smaller western democracies. She has always been able to call upon the services of people with considerable private means who were prepared to do unpaid public work, and who have been, for the most part, personally honest. In theory democracy ought to function well enough without such a 'ruling class,' but we shall see in the next two chapters what has happened when politics become too much of a profession. The 'ruling class' system was by no means ideal, but it suited the Victorian era, it filled Parliament with some hundreds of decent nonentities, who might accept company directorships, but would seldom take a direct bribe, or be amenable to financial pressure from abroad. Walter Bagehot, a very sane and cautious Victorian writer, held that if you stopped the first six hundred men you met in the street you would collect as intelligent a crowd as the members of

Post-War Democracy in Britain

Parliament. Actually the system would always send to Westminster about thirty or forty men who were considerably above the average, and of whom three or four were outstanding personalities, a Gladstone or a Disraeli, a Lord Randolph Churchill or a Parnell.

The machinery of electioneering, in those days of small electorates, was simple. It was, however, curiously effective in registering changes of sentiment in the country. Both sides bribed and used unfair influence on their workers, but as their opportunities for bribery and influence were more or less equally divided, and there were few safe seats, the voting at a General Election did respond quite remarkably to prevailing currents of public opinion. Even the unfranchised majority could have some influence. The whole business was treated as a game, which no one took too seriously. Those who had not got a vote could at least throw a rotten egg. As in France the politicians had to take heed of *le chantage de la rue*. So long as a system works the Englishman will tolerate any number of anomalies. To understand English politics it is worth watching a village cricket match. In its good humour and absurdities it is very like a nineteenth-century election. Then compare this with a 'Test Match' against Australia. The absurdities have become boring and the humour has vanished. The Test Match is more like modern politics.

The system had, of course, its obvious disadvantages. The Members of Parliament, drawn from a small and wealthy minority, were far too tender towards their own interests. They all belonged to the employing class. The Liberals, right up to 1914, owed much of their financial support to the wealthy cotton manufacturers and to the shipping firms of the North. Even their rank and file were drawn largely from nonconformist shopkeepers and little business men. The Conservatives were landowners, and industrialists.

Europe's Dance of Death

Neither side cared to attack the other's interests too severely—a General Election might always reverse the position. Slums were tolerated, wages kept low, and such social services as education could only be introduced piece-meal and after endless delay. It suited both sides to accept, as some mysterious working of providence, the existence of 'economic laws' which could usually be invoked to protect one's interests and discourage State activities.

There has always existed, in English politics, a solid core of extremely selfish and reactionary men. There are families, wealthy and consequently highly honoured, which for several generations have obstructed every reform. You will find their great-grandfathers voting to prevent the abolition of slavery, and insisting that women must be used to pull the coal trucks in the mines. Their grandfathers kept little children working in the cotton mills, and retained the death penalty for minor offences. Their fathers fought against free and compulsory education and the Plimsoll safety-line for ships. They themselves, after a youth spent in obstructing Home Rule for Ireland, Old Age Pensions, and National Insurance, are now the elder statesmen of the Government party, occupying 'safe' seats in the Commons, or putting in an occasional appearance at the House of Lords. Anatole France was perhaps right: '*Les réactionnaires sont des méchantes gens.*' If so, England has always had this evil streak.

The twenty years which preceded the 1914 war saw the 'ruling class' system weakened from two sides. A new type of man, usually beginning his career as a radical, began pushing his way first into Parliament and then into the Cabinet. There had always been a few men of this type in English politics, but it was sufficiently rare for them to reach Cabinet rank that Joseph Chamberlain seemed to believe that he was the first. 'The charmed circle has been broken,'

Post-War Democracy in Britain

he wrote in 1880, when he became a Minister under Gladstone, 'and a new departure made, which is an event in English political history.' The Liberals began to recruit more of these 'new men.' Only a few of them followed Chamberlain, who 'cashed in' on his radical past, and joined the Conservatives. Several, like Mr. John Burns and Mr. Lloyd George, were in Asquith's Government.

The other attack came from the trade unions, and a few theoretical socialists. Some of their leaders, unable to get the seats they wanted from the Liberals, began to stand as an Independent Labour Party. A handful of them, including Keir Hardie, Ramsay MacDonald, Snowden, and Arthur Henderson, found their way into the House of Commons. The new atmosphere was very noticeable in the three years which preceded the war. The old obstructionists saw the flood-gates opening. This accounts for the extraordinary bitterness of their opposition to Mr. Lloyd George's 'predatory budget,' and the fierceness with which they defended the House of Lords. Defeated on both points they revenged themselves by giving dangerous and unconstitutional support to the Ulster volunteers. It is probable that many Conservatives welcomed the outbreak of war with the feeling that 'it would stop all that radical nonsense, at any rate.' To some extent they were right.

On the evening of Amistice night Mr. Lloyd George said to one of his secretaries that the first thing England ought to do was to send some food ships to Germany. It would have been a gesture that might possibly have saved civilization, and it would almost certainly have been supported by the majority of English people. Except for the rich and those who hang round them there was very little vindictiveness after the war—least of all amongst those who had fought it. Unfortunately by 1918 the Liberal Party was split to pieces, and the old gang were already half into the saddle. The

Europe's Dance of Death

General Election, immediately after the war, got them well home.

There had been little control over the making of profits, and money for the Election was poured out by a new type of Conservative, the tough business man who had done well in the war. They appealed to the meanest feelings of a disillusioned and war-weary electorate. Men, like Sir Eric Geddes, went about the country describing how Germany could be squeezed like an orange 'till the pips squeaked.' They got a lot of support from those who were already beginning to feel the pinch of the economic slump, and thought that the business men might avert it. The Opposition was hopelessly divided. Their organization had disappeared in the war, and they had little money. The war profiteers and their lackadaisical sons romped home, the easiest of winners. The Parliament which was sitting during the peace negotiations was probably the worst which had assembled at Westminster for many decades.

With the virtual disappearance of the Liberals, the Labour party became the official Opposition, the only possible alternative Government. To understand the full significance of this it is necessary to consider how democracy actually functions in modern England. We may start with Mr. Smith, who was soon to be joined by his wife, his sons, and a little later by his twenty-one year old daughter. The Conservatives gave England what is really universal suffrage. They were astute enough to know that such extensions are popular, and in the long run a wide franchise plays into the hands of the wealthier party. Within a few years Mr. Smith, who before 1914 might have been a voter in a constituency of ten thousand, had become a far less significant unit amongst fifty thousand.

It is most unlikely that Mr. Smith has any voice in the choice of the two, or possibly three individuals who go to

Post-War Democracy in Britain

the poll. Not 10 per cent of the electorate are paying members of either political party, and most of these have only the tiniest indirect say in selecting the handsome and dashing Captain A, whose father so patriotically supplied the army with boots, or the middle-aged and stolid Mr. B, who struggled hard to make Captain A's father disgorge some of his profits in higher wages.

The two small caucuses which choose the candidates have one anxiety in common. Englishmen are not accustomed to pay for their politics, unless there is some *quid pro quo* in the way of minor public offices or distinctions. (This feeling has grown much stronger since Members of Parliament have drawn salaries—£600 a year—which seem generous to most of the electorate.) Elections cost money, anything up to £1,000. In most constituencies the Conservative candidates are also expected to do a good deal of 'nursing' between elections, and that is extremely expensive.

Money, therefore, plays a large part in the selection of candidates on either side. This reduces proceedings to something like a Dutch auction. Unless a Conservative candidate has very strong local connections he will be expected to put up about £2,000 a year for the expenses of a good winnable seat. The amount drops rapidly as the prospects become more doubtful. On the Labour side the larger trade unions finance some of their own officials or nominees on a scale so generous that they can outbid all except the very wealthy or very popular non-union man or woman.

In all this Mr. Smith and his family of voters clearly take no part. Suppose that, greatly daring, a group of Mr. Smiths decide to run a candidate of their own choosing. They find themselves from the start faced by every sort of financial and practical difficulty. They must put up £150 deposit, which is liable to be lost if their man does not poll an eighth

Europe's Dance of Death

of the votes cast. They have to build up machinery to reach every elector—this includes addressing, probably twice over, some fifty thousand envelopes, it means organizing dozens of meetings, and nowadays competing with the travelling loud-speaker and cinema show. It is not surprising that the most stout-hearted individualist fights shy, and that it is most unusual for a non-party candidate to run for election, and still more unusual for him to succeed.

Imagine society as a triangle, with the richest group at the apex, broadening down to the large low-income group at the base. The pre-1914 party system divided this triangle more or less vertically, though the Liberals could claim the larger working-class vote. Since 1918 the dividing line has become more and more horizontal. The collapse of the Labour Party in 1931, and the formation of a 'National' party swung the line still more round. While a number of very poor men always vote Conservative, hardly any of the rich voted Labour in 1931, and not many in the next General Election of 1935. I was a candidate at both elections, and in neither case did I have the avowed support of half a dozen men with over £5 a week.

This division is thoroughly unhealthy. So long as both sides have approximately the same resources, commonsense will limit the amount of money spent in wooing a constituency. Directly one party is far richer than the other, both centrally and locally, it pays the wealthier group to be lavish with their propaganda, and the thousand and one ways in which money can be used to win support. My last opponent used to take seven or eight thousand constituents on a yearly 'joy-ride' to London or elsewhere. Some men 'dry-nurse' their constituents by letting money seep through the innumerable clubs and societies. Others, more crudely, adopt methods which can best be described as 'wet nursing.'

The huge modern constituencies lend themselves to this

Post-War Democracy in Britain

kind of indirect bribery. The keen politicians are few, and it must be confessed that the large women's vote is not much interested in anything except 'bread and butter politics.' Hardly one in four voters hear either candidate speak. In the north of England the old tradition of 'heckling' candidates still prevails, and a man needs a certain amount of mother wit, but over large parts of England the people sit in stolid silence. The flood of war-time propaganda has made everyone extremely sceptical. Cynical and slightly contemptuous, they listen to speeches which must either be dishonest or attempt to explain issues which are everyday becoming more complicated, more technical, and less suited for popular exposition.

This has played into the hands of the richer party. Using the methods, and often the services of the professional advertising agents, they concentrate on putting a few simple ideas and slogans across to the public. If the idea is frankly dishonest—the 'Zinoviev letter' in 1925, 'your post-office savings are in danger' in 1931—then they wait till the last possible moment before the polling day. The public dimly realizes it has been tricked, but its memory in such matters is short.

The 'Zinoviev letter' business had a special interest to me. When I was working in Berlin I used to be pestered by a seedy individual, probably a White Russian, who hawked round a bundle of letters reputed to have been written by leading Communists. Some of them may have been genuine—Government offices in totalitarian countries are usually corrupt—but probably the poor little man turned them out himself. Several of these were draft plans for communist activities abroad. They could have been bought for a few shillings. It was one of these—bought by a Conservative with a German name and antecedents—which was broadcast over England two days before a General Election, and sent

Europe's Dance of Death

hundreds of thousands rushing to the polls to save England from the Russian menace. I have often wondered whether my down-at-heels friend ever received an adequate reward for his services to the Conservative Party.

The type of politician who was so successful in 1919 has continued to dominate the House of Commons. Gone are the days when Disraeli could look at the stolid rows of country squires who supported him, and thank his stars for the finest 'brute vote' in Europe. The old landed families have faded out of the picture. It would be difficult to imagine a modern Prime Minister picking out first his gamekeeper's letter from his post—a pleasant custom of Walpole.

Signor Mussolini often criticizes his neighbours' institutions with a candour which he would allow no Italian to use about fascism. He usually refers to the English and French 'pluto-democracies.' Certainly England has produced a kind of hyphenated and perverted system which is weighted so heavily in favour of the rich that it has ceased to deserve the name of democracy. Since 1918 we have developed a solid and unbroken plutocratic bloc. This has been the basis of our Government ever since, except for two short-lived minority Governments which the Labour party has been allowed to achieve, and which ended as soon as the block was ready to take over the Government again. Democracy has, in fact, placed England permanently under the rule of successful business men.

One great advantage accrues to a party containing all the rich. It is extremely easy for them to buy over or cajole some of their opponents. This serves a double purpose. It provides the Conservatives, who are apt to be lazy, with some hack politicians, amenable and hard-working, whose presence makes the Cabinet seem more democratic. On the other hand, each defection from the Labour ranks has a most depressing effect on the rank and file of the party.

Post-War Democracy in Britain

Always a little suspicious of their leaders, they become more and more cynical about the whole political business. They get driven towards fascism, communism or any anti-democratic nostrum.

It is not very difficult to win over a certain type of man from a party which is poor, and has not very good prospects. Most Englishmen have an unduly high proportion of snob-bishness in their character. They respect titles, wealth, old houses, and royalty. The ordinary Labour leader, especially if he has worked his way up the trade union ladder, has had a hard life, and very few illusions about his fellow-workers. In middle age he is introduced to a new kind of society, comfortable and sure of itself. The temptation to find a niche in it for himself is very strong. Many of the older English political families, which have been the most vicious in their obstructiveness, have an hereditary skill and experience in dealing with their political opponents. Generations as country squires have taught them the technique of amiable condescension. A politician, to be successful, must be something of an actor, and like all actors he is susceptible to flattery. The older Conservatives know how to apply this balm, especially to men who have worked their way up the social ladder.

The second Labour Government, which took office in 1929, suffered very badly from this kind of 'social measles.' Very few escaped the rash altogether. The easiest to win over was the party leader. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was a vain, weak and egocentric man. He had the attractiveness and superficial qualities which so often bring such men to the head of popular movements. He was always the hero of his own romance, and like Joseph Chamberlain could never get over his pride at having forced his way into the ruling class. Perhaps his most revealing remark was made when he became 'National' Prime Minister. 'Now all the

Europe's Dance of Death

duchesses will be running after me.' They did not run. They took their time. Gradually they enticed him and some of his colleagues away from their old surroundings. It was easy, when the time came in 1931, to lure him, his son, and a few others over to the Conservative side.

Up to 1931 it had been possible to think that the two-party system had developed again, the Labour party taking the place of the Liberals. It was true that the dice were very heavily weighted in favour of the Conservatives. They had their overwhelming majority in the House of Lords, their great advantage in the constituencies, but Labour had twice held office in the decade after the war. The crisis of 1931 showed that the Conservatives could also call upon the services of that mysterious entity which in England is known as 'the City' and corresponds to some extent to 'Wall Street.' It was 'the City' which forced the crisis, ostensibly to protect the gold standard, and to prevent the country going bankrupt. The political influence of the bankers has always been recognized, but seldom applied. Some ten years earlier the *Financial Times* had warned the Government that 'half a dozen men at the top of the five big banks could upset the whole fabric of Government finance by refraining from renewing Treasury bills.' They now exercised their powers. Actually the first act of the 'National Government' was to go off the gold standard. Soon afterwards the country was made bankrupt by its refusal to pay the interest on the American debt. An Englishman may perhaps be allowed to point out that this lamentable and unnecessary decision was made in direct contradiction to the wishes of the electorate, so far as the electorate can be said to have expressed any clear ideas in that confused General Election.

It is probable that the 1931 election, with its totally spurious appeal for 'non-party' politics, can be taken as marking the end of democracy in England. The Labour

Post-War Democracy in Britain

party was hopelessly split by the defection of its three leaders—MacDonald, Snowden and the unfortunate Mr. Thomas. Since that date there has been a growing lack of interest in domestic politics, an increasingly cynical view about those who take part in them. This feeling helps the Conservative Party, which owes much of its success to the idea that, as it does not much matter who goes back to the House of Commons, it will be best to send someone with plenty of money who 'can do a bit of good in the constituency.' The generation of those who did well in the 1914 war is dying out, but their places are taken by their sons and sons-in-law—plump, well-groomed young men who have been saved by birth or marriage from those experiences which are supposed to make a man—work and poverty.

It is as well that foreigners should understand the nature of our pluto-democracy. The composition of the Conservative Party in the House of Commons since 1935 has been the subject of a recent analysis.¹ The members returned at that election governed the country throughout the Abyssinian and Spanish wars. They endorsed the Munich Agreement, and have finally landed the world into the war of 1939. The political reactions to these events will be considered later when we deal with the history of the last few years. For the present it is necessary to show that the decisions were made by a very special type of English man and woman.

The Conservative Party—we may now include the 'National Liberal' and 'National Labour' groups, as these have been completely absorbed—won some four hundred seats in 1935. This was not quite such an overwhelming majority as four years previously. They had lost some of the

¹ Simon Haxey: *Tory M.P.* I am indebted to this for many of my figures.

Europe's Dance of Death

younger men who held industrial seats, but the plutocracy remained substantially unaltered. They are not just rich men. They are *very* rich men. Some thirty of the 1931 Conservatives had died by 1938. They left *on an average* over £200,000 apiece. They remained a body of successful business men, rather than landowners. Over 40 per cent of the sitting Government members are directors of companies, some 181 members holding 775 directorships amongst them. A very large proportion of the remaining Conservatives, though not actually directors, are closely connected by family ties with big business concerns. Thus the Courtaulds, the artificial silk manufacturers, have one member of their family, and also two sons-in-law in the House of Commons. The latter, one of whom is Mr. Butler the Foreign Under-Secretary, are not amongst the directors.

The Conservatives are, from one point of view, internationally minded. There is hardly a country in the world in which some members have not got a direct financial interest, while on the other hand, there is hardly an international firm of standing which cannot call on the services of a Member to defend its interests. The ramifications of the Guinness family, who are brewers, the Guests, who are iron-masters, and a dozen other families, half-business and half-aristocratic, are too complicated to be described without the use of charts. Perhaps we may take one instance of an American family which has come to England and set out firmly on what the French call *la rue décorée*.

The methods by which John Jacob Astor collected his twenty million dollars are probably better known in America than in England. *Pecunia non olet*, and certainly the very least taint has disappeared when dollars are turned into pounds. We are more interested in the subsequent fate of that solid block of money. His great-grandson William Waldorf Astor settled in England, after having added con-

Post-War Democracy in Britain

siderably to his inherited fortune. He was naturalized in 1899, and in 1916 was given a peerage. He left some twenty million *pounds*, which was divided between his two sons. Of his two enormous houses, Cliveden, which went to the eldest, has gained some notoriety since, and Hever Castle was taken by the younger, Major J. J. Astor. Although the first Lord Astor has become a British subject he established a huge American Trust for his sons. The trust was the subject of a complicated law suit in 1937. The preservation intact of the Astor millions seems to have been regarded as a sacred duty.

Now let us consider the political importance of the family some thirty years after William Waldorf Astor became a British subject. The present Lord Astor is in the House of Lords. His brother, the Hon. J. J. Astor, sits in the House of Commons for a Kent constituency. His wife, Lady Nancy Astor, took over his seat at Plymouth, and was the first woman Member of Parliament. His son recently got into Parliament for a London constituency. Two of his daughters are married to Members of Parliament. A little family group of five in the 'Lower House' and one in the Upper.

Outside Parliament the family also has considerable influence. Viscount Astor owns the well-known Sunday newspaper, the *Observer*. It is in this that the ageing Mr. Garvin preaches his weekly sermon pointing out the advantages of being on the stronger side. The *Observer* was violently opposed to any grant of self-government to India, was equally violently in favour of Italy during the Abyssinian war. It slavered flattery and praise over General Franco in the Spanish war, and over Hitler during the Munich crisis. Not until the present war was inevitable did the paper perform perhaps the most remarkable *volte-face* in the history of English journalism.

Europe's Dance of Death

The Hon. John Jacob Astor, M.P., has a holding interest in *The Times*, but it is always a matter of dispute how far the Astor family can directly control the policy of that paper. It is absurd to pretend that they do not have a considerable influence upon it. Apart from this he is a director of Hambro Bank, of the Great Western Railway, and of the Phoenix Assurance Company.

The case of the Astor family is interesting as showing the immense amount of influence on English political life which can spring from a fortune which was not made in England, and does not even seem to have been transferred here. There are similar British fortunes which have had much longer to function in the political world.

One of the lynch-pins holding together the English obstructionists has been the Londonderry family. During the last three centuries they have accumulated property in North Ireland and large estates in Durham. The latter proved to cover an extremely rich coal-field. Besides the vast unearned fortunes which have come to them, they were—a century or so ago—one of the great 'tax-eating' families whose success in putting their relatives into jobs was such a feature of British history up till the beginning of the Victorian era. One example has become classic. The third Marquess, after drawing £160,000 of public money for ten years' residence in Vienna, was sufficiently brazen to demand a pension from the Premier, Lord Liverpool. The latter's endorsement, 'This is too much,' became public property, but its only effect was to spur the Marquess to more political intrigues. He became a leading opponent of the Reform Bill.

The most famous member of the family was Castlereagh, probably the only British statesman whose corpse has been hissed as it passed on its way to Westminster Abbey. The English are seldom vindictive against the dead, but popular

Post-War Democracy in Britain

opinion agreed with Shelley and Byron that not death, even a suicide's death, could expiate the evil which he had done.

*I met Murder on the way—
He had a mask like Castlereagh—
Very smooth he looked yet grim;
Seven blood-hounds followed him.*

During the nineteenth century the family enormously increased its wealth by the exploitation of their coal-mines. The manner in which this was done, and the methods by which they sought to prevent any trade union organization, have helped to make Durham the most solid Labour area in England. The Londonderry family continued its intermittent interest in politics. It was always represented in the House of Lords, and usually in the House of Commons. One seat in North Ireland, where they have much property, has returned a member of the family for ninety out of the last one hundred and sixty years. There can have been few social reforms during this period which the family has not opposed, and sometimes succeeded in delaying.

The present head of the family has been President of the Conservative party, and Mr. Neville Chamberlain is frequently his guest. He and his wife were the chief social influences in bringing over Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. He was Air Minister until 1935, and since that time has been associated in the public mind with a pro-German group of politicians and industrial magnates. Like all of this group his fervent admiration for Germany began after Hitler's accession to power, when he became a frequent visitor to Germany, and a personal friend of Göring.

In 1938 he published an account of his relations with Germany under the title *Ourselves and Germany*. Most of it is an apologia for Hitler's successive acts of aggression, and

Europe's Dance of Death

its only interest is the insight which it affords to what may be called the high Tory view of Germany. It is clear that Göring and Ribbentrop succeeded in persuading the whole of this ignorant and gullible section that the Nazis were the last bulwark of capitalism and the rich against the growing forces of Communism. Here are two quotations. The English has gone a bit wrong in the second excerpt, but the meaning is fairly clear.

The German opposition to Bolshevism continued unabated, and he (Göring) and Herr Hitler viewed with grave anxiety the Bolshevist influences in Spain which were extending to France and Belgium. Germany encircled by Bolshevist countries was placed in a position of extreme danger both from the military and the economic point of view.

To my mind we lost a great opportunity at that time (1936). The anti-Communist platform was (and still is) invaluable, and I am quite sure that if we could have gone forward and made Germans understand that while we deprecated and in fact condemned a great deal of what they were doing, still they could rely on us to be wholeheartedly associated with them in their attitude towards Communism.

Lord Londonderry was prominent in that group of Conservatives who carried on a violent and unscrupulous propaganda for General Franco, and did their utmost to confuse the public about German and Italian intervention. In his book he justifies the shelling of Almeria as a 'swift retaliatory action, whose operation was confined to a period of only a few hours and to objects of military importance, and was certainly not disproportionate to the crime.' I happened to visit Almeria several times. It was a small seaside town, with a small port. It contained no military objects, important or

Post-War Democracy in Britain

unimportant. Lord Londonderry, with no real information to go upon, merely repeats as on his own authority the official German statement.

At the beginning of the present war Lord Londonderry found it necessary to issue a public statement that he had not been interned. I suppose there was a feeling that he had gone a bit too far. Usually the old families—the Cavendishes, the Stanleys, the Cecils, the Lindsays, etc.—go on their way ‘magnificently unaware’ of what is said about them, whether for good or evil.

In nearly all the cases of the land-owning families it will be found that a large part of their estate has acquired an extra non-agricultural value, sometimes through mines, but more often through the spread of industrial towns. The families are therefore able to depend on sources of revenue far safer and far less national than the rent-roll of farms. This has considerably changed their outlook. They no longer have those country ties which gave the House of Commons its pleasantly amateur atmosphere. The modern Conservatives hover between the City and Westminster, between a directorship and an Under-Secretaryship. They are probably more intelligent, but they have joined the new ‘international.’ While Communists have been urging the workers of the world to unite, the capitalists have gone a long way to reach the same goal.

The French, we shall see, have the same burden—their ‘two hundred families.’ The difference between the two countries is marked. The French families have kept outside the political market-place, using their influence indirectly. The leaders of the English families, with their cousins, and their connections by marriage, have always gone into Parliament. This is an old English tradition, and explains why the House of Commons has been described as ‘the best club in Europe.’ No one would ever dream of applying such a name

Europe's Dance of Death

to a Continental House of Assembly. The tradition remains very constant. About a century ago there were just over two hundred relations of Conservative peers in the House of Commons. To-day there are nearly one hundred and fifty. The difference is that they are now all on one side, whereas formerly the Tory aristocrats were balanced by a fair proportion of Whigs.

It is often said that this queer tradition has saved Parliament from the various kinds of irregularity which have brought democracy into such disrepute. There is some truth in this. Not only are most of the members sufficiently well off not to be tempted by a dishonest deal unless it is on a large enough scale to be respectable, but they are also intensely loyal to each other. The only scandals which have come out for some years have attached themselves to those who definitely 'did not belong.' There was the Marconi scandal before the 1914 war, involving Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Rufus Isaacs. After the war Mr. J. H. Thomas, the former railway trade union leader, was forced to give up his seat in the 'National' Cabinet because of leakage of budget information. The far worse scandals concerning the sale of honours and peerages, which have been going on for decades, receive little publicity, and have never, to the best of my knowledge, been brought before the Courts. There is a kind of politicians' trade union, born from the common interests of Liberals and Conservatives in the nineteenth century, but now accepted without any compensatory advantages by the Labour Party.

The new party alignment has brought the rich, the old families, the industrialists, and most of the professional classes and smaller business men all on one side. The manual workers are divided, with a majority voting Labour. This has altered the 'balance of power' inside England in some rather subtle ways, which have had a considerable effect on

Post-War Democracy in Britain

our foreign policy. Take, for instance, the position of Catholics and Jews, two important groups. The former have become far more influential, and the latter have rather lost ground. In the nineteenth century the Liberals, with their nonconformist backing, were rather truculently 'protestant.' The Catholics in England, a little under 10 per cent of the population, are made up of a few rich and aristocratic families, a certain number of middle-class people, mostly converts, and a block of very poor working families, of whom a large proportion are Irish immigrants and their descendants. All these sections tended to be Conservative, but were divided amongst themselves because of the Irish Home Rule question. An old tradition, dating from the time of their exclusion from Parliament, kept the wealthy Catholic families out of Parliament, and they often went into the Foreign Office. Apart from this the Catholics had little influence in English politics until 1914.

The richer Jewish families took a keen interest in politics, and they always had plenty of representatives on each side. The party leaders liked to have a Rothschild, a Brunner or a Mond on their benches in order to keep that personal contact with high finance which was so important. The Jewish members were hardworking, and not too obtrusive. Most of them were completely anglicized. By avoiding any suspicion of becoming a 'minority' selling itself to one side or the other, the Jews were spared from the activities of the anti-semitic politician and agitator.

Since 1919 the position of each group has changed. The Catholics are now powerful in both camps. The rich Catholics have become much more prominent on the extreme right wing of the Conservative party. Their religion as much as their wealth tends to make them violently anti-Communist, and also to be extremely favourably inclined towards Italian Fascism. In the Lords, in the

Europe's Dance of Death

Foreign Office, and to a less extent in the Commons the 'Old Catholics' have had an immense influence in orienting British foreign policy in favour of Italy and as a consequence of Germany. The new developments in Europe since September 1939 have, of course, upset all their theories. They find Fascism allied to Communism, and Germany joining with Russia to divide up Catholic Poland. It is, however, now too late. On the other side of the House of Commons the Labour Party are terrified of the Catholic vote. There are few 'safe' seats in the industrial North which have not got a core of extremely ignorant and backward Catholics. Amongst these the priests are still omnipotent, and their influence was very noticeable during the Spanish war, when they were fanatically pro-Franco. The painful hesitations of the official Labour leaders, hesitations which enabled the Government to carry through their 'Non-Intervention' policy to the advantage of Italy and Germany, can be traced to the activities of those many Labour members whose seats depend on a bloc of Irish Catholics in their constituencies.

The Jews, on the other hand, have lost ground. The wealthy anglicized families are now all on one side. Their support, being taken for granted, is less valued. The poorer Jews, many of them recent emigrants, tend to be extreme and theoretical socialists, not at all popular with the official Labour leaders, and only strong in the tiny Communist party. These latter have developed a kind of back-street quarrel with the riff-raff of the Fascist party. All the usual anti-semitic nonsense is thus being talked at street corners by the followers of Sir Oswald Mosley, and is having its effects in those parts of England where there is some economic conflict between Jewish and non-Jewish traders. The arrival of several thousand German refugees, not all of them imbued with the highest tact and sensibility, has

Post-War Democracy in Britain

certainly not helped to ease a situation which is becoming quite serious. The outbreak of the war has temporarily upset the Fascist propaganda in the same way as it has spoilt the Catholic case, but anti-semitism once started in England will tend to break out again.

Returning to the personnel of the Conservative Party we find the ruling families and the business men are mostly on the back-benches, or holding comparatively minor appointments. There are two reasons for this. When the so-called 'National' Government was formed it had to promise some Cabinet positions to those who came over from the Labour and the Liberal parties. The terms were not ungenerous, and were soon to be the cause of much grumbling amongst the older Conservatives. Each of these tiny groups were given four major appointments in the Cabinet, and as they have managed to cling on to most of these the Ministry is not very representative of the party. The latter, however, cannot complain about the loyalty of these importations. Sir John Simon and Mr. Burgin have been *plus royaliste que le roi*, more Conservative than the die-hards. The others have been extremely docile. The Conservatives have never hesitated to use political adventurers from outside the narrow circle of the old families. In one case, that of Disraeli, they even took him as a leader, and followed him in some very curious experiments. The Conservative system brings a large number of amiable but rather futile young men into Parliament. Many belong to the class once described as 'little brothers of the rich.' (Travellers on the Continent will remember the 'Little Sisters of the Poor.') These young Conservatives think that a good cricket team should be mostly amateurs, but should contain a few professionals to help with the bowling. They like their Cabinets to be arranged in the same way.

After eight years of 'National' Government the Ministry

Europe's Dance of Death

still shows marked signs of its origin, though the Government benches are solidly Conservative. Let us look at the men who brought us into the war. In one respect Mr. Neville Chamberlain resembles his colleague, the young Mr. Malcolm MacDonald. Both really owe their position to their fathers having chosen the right time to desert their radical friends and join the Conservatives. Mr. Chamberlain is, however, an old man, the way for him was paved by his brother Austen, and his family have almost been accepted into the ruling class. He has helped to qualify for that honour by his business connections—he was amongst other things, director of the armament firm, Birmingham Small Arms.

Sir Samuel Hoare belongs to an older family, and he married a daughter of Earl Beauchamp, which gives him several relations amongst the back benches. He is a member of the old banking firm, which is of Quaker origin. Sir Samuel is definitely in the magic circle, though not so securely there as Lord Halifax, with his ten thousand acres and a hereditary title. Lord Halifax is an unusual type—extremely religious, with a conscience which sometimes gets him into political difficulties, but has not prevented him from confusing people on certain points of foreign policy. He is also extremely intelligent, which can hardly be said of Lord Stanhope, one of the few purely 'family' appointments, and responsible for some remarkable political *gaffes*.

Perhaps Lord Stanhope remains to ensure that the family tradition is maintained, and he has with him the Marquess of Zetland who is descended from the most remarkable of all the 'tax-eating' families, that of Dundas. The first Viscount Melville, after a life spent collecting sinecures, arranged a pension for his wife, another for his daughter, a Scottish sinecure of over £2,500 for his son and a Lordship of the Admiralty at £10,000 a year for his grandson. Apart

Post-War Democracy in Britain

from these the leading families are chiefly represented in the minor posts, though the young Earl De La Warr found his way to office through joining and then abandoning the Labour party. The other Cabinet Ministers are mostly self-made men, though Mr. Hudson inherited his interest in a great soap factory, and Mr. Butler married into the Courtauld family. Sir John Simon, the son of a Scottish minister of religion, acquired entirely by his own exertions a large practice at the Bar. Beginning life as an advanced Liberal, he seemed, when in Asquith's Government, to be the great leader of the future. He had all the gifts—eloquence, dialectical skill, a fine presence. Somehow he grew sour in the war. Like so many Liberals he afterwards reacted violently, developing the most profound contempt for the weaker nations, and all the old principles.

Mr. Hore-Belisha, until his dismissal by Mr. Chamberlain, was the only Jew in the Cabinet. He seems to have had a rather undistinguished business career before his great talent for showmanship found an outlet, first in the Liberal party and then in the National Government. Mr. Brown, a former professional Liberal propagandist, has been added to give the Cabinet a more distinctly democratic tone, and also to take on an unpopular job—the Ministry of Labour. He is famous for his loud voice, and I can well remember being lured into a public debate with him when he was still earning a precarious living expounding the benefits of free trade.

Two well-known men, Mr. Churchill and Mr. Eden, were brought back to office by the present war. The former, as grandson of a Duke of Marlborough, is definitely a member of the family circle, though he has been a wayward and unruly member. He really incorporates much of the old Whig tradition, independent in outlook and contemptuous of the shifts and compromises of the modern 'big business'

Europe's Dance of Death

men on the Conservative side. Starting life as a Conservative, he soon became a Liberal. Then he swung round to be the leader of the most reactionary group in Parliament. He is a queer amalgam, full of prejudices based on little knowledge—his ignorance of India was profound—but he has a certain mental honesty which most of his fellow-members so lack.

Mr. Eden is also in the family circle, though not quite so well in as Mr. Duff Cooper, a fellow-rebel against too much 'appeasement.' Both of these youngish men accepted the first part of the appeasement which was directed towards the propitiation of Italy, and both, when still in the Government, participated in the unfortunate policy of that time. It is a complicated story which will be dealt with later in this book. I think that Mr. Eden has been rather fortunate in gaining the good opinion of liberal-minded people all over the world. Neither he, nor Mr. Duff Cooper, can free themselves of responsibility for British foreign policy during most of its disastrous course, and the issues on which they resigned were really of a secondary nature.

The formation of a 'National' Government in 1931, and the temporary subsidence of the Labour party, which for four years had barely fifty seats in the Commons, revived for a time the old Liberal party. It could count few Members of Parliament, but the completeness of the Conservative victory caused some reaction in the country, especially amongst the 'near Conservatives' like Lord Robert Cecil and Lord Lytton. These men represent the older and land-owning type of Conservative, and share with Mr. Churchill a strong suspicion of the new business internationalism. It was due to their efforts that a last attempt was made to organize public opinion outside Parliament. The result was not very satisfactory. The Peace Ballot of 1935, and the reaction against the Hoare-Laval peace terms for Ethiopia

Post-War Democracy in Britain

later in that year are sometimes quoted as examples of the pressure which can be brought upon a Government by a non-Parliamentary movement. When we come to consider these events in a later chapter we shall see that neither the Peace Ballot *before* the General Election, nor the outcry against the Ethiopian terms a few weeks *after* the election in any way diverted the real policy of the British Government. They only strengthened the Government determination to keep two inconsistent policies going at the same time, one of them intended for home consumption, the other for practical use.

The old-fashioned Liberal liked to think that, even if the democratic machine might work badly, yet there was a mysterious force called 'public opinion' which no Government could disregard. I suspect that this is one of the half-truths of pre-war days which has now ceased to have any real validity. Perhaps I am prejudiced from having worked as a foreign correspondent, and watched how 'public opinion' was manufactured. I can remember, for example, being in Berlin at a time when certain British proposals about reparations were being put forward. They were given to the German Press one evening. The same night most of the foreign correspondents were able to see a 'pull' of the next day's leading articles, and sent back cables which ran something like this:

The first German reactions to the new proposals put forward by the British Government were decidedly unfavourable. I learnt from well-informed circles in touch with Wilhelmstrasse (*this was of course the little German Foreign Office official I had seen for a few minutes before he left for his suburban home*) that clauses 5 and 6 would be totally unacceptable to the German Government. City opinion is also hostile to the idea of payments in kind.

Europe's Dance of Death

The *Boersen Zeitung* states emphatically that . . . The more popular view of the British suggestions is expressed in the *Berliner Tageblatt* which sums up their attitude in one extremely pungent phrase . . . *and so on*.

Just about the time that Herr Schmidt was glancing for the first time through the proposals before hurrying off to his office, Mr. Smith in London, gulping down his coffee before going to *his* office, would be reading about the way in which Herr Schmidt was supposed to be reacting to them. Half a century ago life moved slower, the people whose opinion mattered were fewer and more leisured, newspapers were cautious and solid, decisions on foreign affairs resulted from long-written negotiations. There was time for people to get together, to discuss and protest. We have, as it were, short-circuited the real public opinion. All that seems to be left of it, at any rate in England, appears in the activities of a few individuals, usually of very pronounced views, who have appointed themselves as our moral censors. Their names, singly or more often jointly, appear at the foot of letters to the Press, or as signatories to some manifesto. The Conservative Government pays no attention to them at all.

While public opinion has extremely little influence in shaping future policy, and in affecting the major or more technical issues, there is, of course, plenty of freedom to criticize the Government. The only limitations to this are practical—the difficulty of ‘getting ideas across’ to a large population without plenty of financial backing. The Press, for example, is far less independent than it was before 1914. The concentration of control in the hands of a few very rich Press magnates has had an effect on the voicing of public opinion which is very similar to that which has taken place in Parliament. Nevertheless, criticism of the Government—through the Parliamentary Opposition, the

Post-War Democracy in Britain

trade unions, the Press, and various organizations does often force the Government to modify its policy, especially in domestic matters. From time to time some regulation, such as the recent allowances for soldiers' families, will profoundly shock people. The public murmurs the traditional English growl—'You can't do that there here.' Then the Government gives way, appoints a commission of inquiry or makes some concession. Sometimes an individual Minister may resign, as Sir Samuel Hoare did over the Hoare-Laval peace terms.

As a directing and constructive force democracy has ceased to have much meaning, but England has still great liberty of speech, and in this way 'public opinion' functions as a kind of revisionary body. Paradoxical as it may seem it is sometimes true that liberty flourishes better when there is no formal democratic machinery. Anatole France took that view: 'Public opinion, which was a reality under the Monarchy and the Empire has no existence in our time, and the people once ardent and generous are now incapable either of love or of hatred, of admiration or contempt.' Allowing something for the *fin de siècle* pessimism then fashionable in France, I do believe that a badly-working democracy has this effect on liberty. No one can read nineteenth-century European history without being struck by the ease with which great popular movements against the Government could be set on foot, and the success which they often achieved. Read, for example, an account of the processes by which Italy was freed from Austrian rule, and compare the repressive measures used by Vienna with those which Berlin would now employ—or for that matter is employing in Czechoslovakia, and in Austria itself.

As I suggested in the last chapter the two ideas of liberty and democracy are not always inseparable. The horrible part of Nazi rule is that there is neither any freedom of thought

Europe's Dance of Death

or expression, nor any popular control over the Government. The darkness is complete. In other totalitarian countries gleams of light still exist. In Italy there is some freedom of discussion, some trade union organization, even if people have little say in their Government's policy. Lenin, Trotski and Stalin have encouraged their subjects to criticize the bureaucracy with the greatest freedom, so long as their attacks do not extend to the Communist form of government or the conduct of foreign affairs. Their Soviets provide a kind of popular control, which, while effective at the bottom, ceases to function long before it gets to the top.

In England and France we find an almost complete theoretical freedom of thought and discussion. The only factor limiting the power of organizing public opinion against the Government is the very practical one of money. It is characteristic of a 'pluto-democracy' that it should be able to rely so successfully on the power of the purse to stifle effective criticism. I have tried to show the effect of money on democracy in England. It should, I feel, be clear that we had not got a real democracy functioning when we had to face the great testing time which began about 1935. In the next chapter I shall attempt a similar discussion of democracy in France, the only other first-class European Power which retained the machinery of direct popular control. The machine is very different from that in England, but under strain it develops much the same weaknesses.

Democracy in France

The English have learnt a great deal about the French in the last twenty-five years. During that time a hundred Englishmen must have been to France for every one that has visited the United States. The two countries have had their differences, especially in the early 'twenties, but the personal contact has continued. We have learnt to have a very high regard for the French. We have found them orderly and polite, thrifty and industrious, good fighters but not militarists, a very decent people. My own French 'background' dates from before the 1914 war when I stayed with families during vacations from Oxford. One was that of a farmer in Normandy, a man who had fought against Germany just forty years before, and taught me how vividly that memory remained amongst his generation. My other host was a professor in a *lycée*, a far less attractive type, with some of the rather stuffy futility of M. Bergeret in *Le Mannequin D'Osier*. From him I learnt a little French, and quite a lot about bourgeois life in a provincial town. Unlike most of my generation I never saw France during the war, and since then I have spent longer in Germany than France, but the latter remains essentially the most familiar and least 'foreign' of all the Continental countries. The same is true of nearly all my countrymen, and will be still truer after the present war.

It is because the English have learnt to appreciate the virtues of the French that they find so astounding the

Europe's Dance of Death

inefficient Government under which they have been content to live. The French themselves will describe their Chamber of Deputies as riotous and ill-mannered, wasteful and incoherent, lacking just those qualities which we have come to expect from the people themselves. The paradox was the cause, in Victorian times, of much self-righteous nonsense being talked in England. We like to think that each country gets 'the Government it deserves.' Our own Parliament then exhibited the merits of the British, while concealing their defects. The House of Commons was a businesslike and practical institution, respectful of authority and tradition. The sonorous periods of its leaders gave little indication of the squalid conditions prevailing in our slums, the thriftlessness of our people, our wastefulness and intemperance compared with French standards, and our many sins of commission and omission in connection with our Empire. The British Parliament was like the fine shop window of a poorly run department store. The French Chamber was like a piece of neglected ground in front of a sound and well-built house.

Somehow or other the French have never got the parliamentary machine to function. This is partly due to the Napoleonic tradition, but chiefly to the circumstances in which the Republic was founded. The French have come to connect a Republic with the more drab and inglorious periods of their history. They accepted the present constitution, but it was born in a defeat, and 'cradled in the Commune.' Even the Second Empire, in spite of its disastrous ending, had been 'very good fun while it lasted.' Many Frenchmen had the feeling that their new Parliament and President were only a 'stop-gap' before a monarchical restoration. This accounts for much of the instability of the French Government, the failure of public life to attract a good type of Frenchman, and the tendency to regard the

Democracy in France

army and foreign affairs as something outside the squalid and ephemeral game of politics. It also explains the recurrence of that typically Latin phenomenon—the political soldier aspiring to a dictatorship. In this respect French conditions resemble in a milder form the constant *malaise* of Spain. General MacMahon, General Boulanger, and in recent years Colonel de la Rocque have their parallels in such Spaniards as Serrano, General Prim, Primo de Rivera, and the present *caudillo*, General Franco.

In France the Government too often resembles those 'dissolving views' which used to delight our parents. During the forty-four years between 1875 and 1919 there were fifty-seven different Cabinets, and innumerable crises, during some of which the Government resigned and then carried on again. Very few Ministers were in office long enough to adumbrate, much less to push through, a definite policy. The equivalent figures in England would be thirteen Cabinets, with an average life of well over three years. The French travesty of democratic government requires some explanation besides an inauspicious beginning and the Napoleonic tradition.

The Constitution itself has developed along unfortunate lines. Originally it was intended to give the President a far more active and important position than he now holds. He is elected for seven years, and is nominally in charge of international relations. The armed forces are at his disposal, and he appoints military and civil officers. He is not directly responsible to Parliament, and can keep alliances and military conventions secret. His prerogatives would, in theory, make him as powerful and irresponsible as the Kaiser in earlier days, but just because they were so great they have been whittled down by convention until he is little more than a strictly constitutional monarch, following always the dictates of his Prime Minister, the *Président de Conseil*.

Europe's Dance of Death

The struggle between the Right and Left wing in French politics has turned very largely upon the question whether some one individual should be given the powers which in theory should belong to the President. Because the Liberals, and probably the mass of the people, are extremely jealous about a personal dictatorship there has been a tendency to break any politician who seemed to be moving in that direction in peace-time. Few Presidents have survived their full seven years. Thiers, MacMahon, Grévy, Casimir-Périer and Millerand were forced to resign; Carnot and Doumer were murdered; Deschanel lost his reason. Loubet was the first who settled down to that anomalous and rather formal position which seems to satisfy the French. In that capacity the Presidents do not provide that stabilizing influence which was intended by the Constitution.

Many English writers, especially before 1914, have ascribed France's difficulties to her electoral system, and to her failure to develop a two-party method of Government. The *scrutin de liste* and the large multi-member constituencies do undoubtedly encourage the growth of small political groups hardly distinguishable from each other either by their names or their doctrines. What foreigner would care to differentiate between the *Union Républicaine*, the *Républicains de Gauche*, the *Gauche Républicaine* and the *Gauche Radicale*? To some extent these little parties exist in all the Continental countries which have adopted some form of parliamentary government. They are partly the result of a fondness for theory and for general ideas. The English always suspect theory, and incline to compromise. In Germany and Spain, as in France, the Government had to depend on the uncertain support of a *bloc* of small parties. Each little party organization tries to sell itself for as much influence and as many political jobs as it can get. This encourages the type of shady politician who lives by

Democracy in France

intrigue, and such individuals have no difficulty in getting into the Chamber under the *scrutin de liste*.

A system which is based on two, or at most three parties, is more likely to enforce a higher standard of public morality because there is more sense of collective responsibility. A scandal against a single individual reflects on the whole party, and unless it is immediately investigated the party is liable to be excluded from office for some time. In the Panama scandal of 1892 large numbers of French public men and deputies were found to be involved. They were mostly men supporting the Government, but they belonged to all sorts of parties. In England, long before the scandal had reached such dimensions, the other members of the party in power would have seen that they were likely to be driven out of public life because of their colleagues, and would have insisted on some kind of an investigation or would at least have prevented the scandal becoming so blatant and indefensible. It is the collective responsibility of the party in power, just as much as the criticism of the opposition, which must safeguard parliamentary government from the grosser forms of corruption.

In England we have noted the gross and increasing use of money power, as well as the existence of certain dubious electoral practices. These are, however, limited to what was allowed by both parties, Liberal and Conservative, throughout the nineteenth century. The public has got used to them, and there is little criticism so long as they are done with some discretion. Some indirect bribery inside the constituencies has become customary. It could now only be effectively fought by an entirely new political party. The sale of honours—peerages, knighthoods, etc.—has long been a recognized way of raising party funds, and was adopted by Liberals as well as Conservatives. It only fell into disrepute after 1918 when a batch of profiteers appeared

Europe's Dance of Death

in the House of Lords. Their numbers, and in some cases their doubtful financial pasts, really did shock public opinion. As the Labour Party was neither willing nor in a position to carry on this method we now hear much less of the traffic in honours. It continues in a modified and indirect manner. So also does the system of accepting party contributions from trade organizations. Here the Labour Party, being financed by the trade unions, feels itself on weaker ground.

All this corruption is for party purposes. The indirect emoluments of individual Members must normally be confined to two sources, both generally accepted as customary. They may accept directorships or salaries for putting forward the parliamentary case for certain trade interests. After holding ministerial rank they can 'go into the City' where they use their special knowledge and influence. Any other ways of exploiting a Parliamentary position are frowned upon, and mostly done *sub rosa*. Political corruption in France tends to be far more individual, and much less discreet.

Take, for example, the Wilson scandal in the 'eighties. M. Wilson, in spite of his name, was a French politician, and a nephew of the President, M. Grévy. He and his uncle were shown to have trafficked in the bestowal of the Legion of Honour. The French take their few honours far more seriously than do the English, and the feeling aroused was extremely bitter. It was one of the reasons for the wide support given to that third-rate political general, Boulanger, when he played for a dictatorship. The difference from English practice was that bribes went direct to the individual politician instead of to a party, and that the dirty work of the 'go-between' was done by a relation of the President. The annoyance in France was the more intense because the men who became so enriched were of the small bourgeois type. People have more sympathy with those who can do

Democracy in France

things on the grand scale like some of the old English 'tax-eating' families.

In this way a vicious circle was created in France. The constant accusations levelled against politicians of all parties kept decent men from entering public life. In the streets the very dangerous cry '*À bas les voleurs*' was heard far too often. It suggests the petty thief for whom there is never any sympathy. In society a deputy was looked upon as a man who had deserted an honourable profession—the Law, medicine, teaching or even journalism—to take up a doubtful but lucrative occupation. His colleagues would regard him with suspicion, not unmixed with some envy for the influence and patronage which he could wield. Readers of M. Duhamel's *Chroniques des Pasquier* may remember what M. Rohner, the scientist, said on the subject:

M. Schleiter a fait sa thèse, autrefois, sur les graisses phosphorées dans les oeufs d'oiseaux. Je me rapelle très bien. Excellent ouvrage. Depuis, M. Schleiter est tombé dans la politique. Nous entendons parler de lui. Que M. Schleiter ne laisse pas trop de regrets à ses anciens collègues et maîtres. Quand un homme de bonne culture se tourne vers la politique, c'est qu'il est inutilisable dans la profession qu'il avait semblé choisir, c'est qu'il n'est plus bon à rien. L'Etat est gouverné par le rebut de toutes les carrières honorables.¹

This difficulty has arisen in nearly every country. What

¹ 'M. Schleiter once wrote a thesis on phosphorated fats in birds' eggs. I remember it well. An excellent bit of work. Since then M. Schleiter has sunk into politics. We hear talk about him, but his old colleagues and masters do not regret him much. When a well-educated man goes into politics, it means that he is useless in the profession he seemed to have chosen. It means he is no good for anything. The country is governed by the cast-offs from every honourable career.'

Europe's Dance of Death

class of man can be tempted into public life? It is hazardous, and—for the honest man—not at all lucrative. It may be possible to combine such a career with the Law or journalism, but only with difficulty. In England we have always depended upon the wealthy amateur, drawn chiefly from a narrow circle. Such men occupy most of the seats in Parliament, together with some successful business men, a few retired naval and military officers with private means, a number of lawyers, and, in these later years, a good many senior trade union officials who are enabled to sit on the Labour side. The mixture, as we have seen, has not worked too well. In France since 1875, in Germany before Hitler, in Italy before Mussolini, in Spain from 1931 until the war, in India since the introduction of the new constitution we find that even worse troubles arise when these classes do *not* take part in public life. The tendency in France has been to get, as M. Rohner suggests, the rejects from the professions, or else the man who goes into public life to make as much money as he can as quickly as possible.

An analysis of the Chamber of Deputies shows that neither 'big business,' nor the old aristocratic families, nor agriculture have many representatives. The 'Two Hundred Families' which are supposed to rule French finance prefer to operate from outside, or indirectly through venal politicians. From time to time members of the old aristocratic families will find their way into Parliament—a Casimir-Périer, a Rohan, or a Cavaignac—but such men are rare in either the Senate or the Chamber. In both Chambers the overwhelming majority of members are drawn from the lower ranks of the so-called liberal professions. Provincial lawyers abound, so curiously enough do doctors of medicine. Inevitably there are journalists in plenty, and the less distinguished type of professor and teacher drift easily into politics.

Democracy in France

One reason why men of talent and refinement will fight shy of politics is the extreme brutality of electioneering. Travellers in France may have stopped to read the placards pasted on the walls during an election. If so they will probably have been astounded to read the most violent and unseemly attacks upon the candidates. Fantastic stories are circulated about their private lives, about the sources of their income, and their domestic habits. The law of libel offers no real protection, nor does long service to the State, or a European reputation. Briand was frequently accused of having been a *maquereau* in his youth, Clemenceau was always taunted with having taken money from the English Government.

Only men of very tough fibre will care to wade through the mud and filth which guard the doors of both Chambers. Even if they reach their goal there is little honour in being a deputy. They are usually treated with complete indifference, even in their own constituencies. In Paris membership of either Chamber is far from being a social asset, nor have any but a few deputies that following amongst the masses which would compensate for the contempt of the educated classes.

The deputy has patronage at his disposal, but this petty and troublesome business only attracts the third-rate men, while it revolts the better class of Frenchman. Mr. Bodley, who in 1910 wrote the standard book on France, has recorded a conversation with a philanthropic business man, belonging to a much revered provincial family. This worthy Frenchman explained why he would not go into political life. It was a comprehensive statement from which a few sentences may be taken, because they are equally true to-day, and because the difficulties they suggest apply in other countries besides France.

. . . For nine months of the year I should have to be

Europe's Dance of Death

in Paris. . . . During those nine months I should witness usually two changes of Ministry; and the votes which I gave in the divisions determining the crisis would alone have any influence on the affairs of my country. . . . Minor consequences would be that I should be vilified and blackmailed in the journals. I should be accused of selling my vote or buying my seat. If there were a fatal accident at my works the Socialist organs would hold me as an assassin. If my wife is invited to the Rothschilds' the anti-Semites would attack her in coarse terms, and tell the priests here that they were risking their souls in voting for an apostate. . . . Instead of living at peace among my own people, from morning to night I should be beset by official applications and official visits. . . . It is this part of a deputy's existence which is particularly pleasing to men like the sitting member, who was a small lawyer practising in the provincial courts. . . . But for people of my condition, as indeed for all men of refined feeling whether wealthy or not, this function of petty local tyrant, of agent of political jobbery, co-operating with a band of obscure wire-pullers, is an odious feature of parliamentary life, and is a powerful cause for deterring the fittest from entering it.¹

The influence of the Catholic Church has, on the whole, been very harmful to the working of democracy in France, just as it has been in Spain and Italy. In theory the Church remains outside politics. A leading Catholic newspaper in England recently explained the principles on which the hierarchy proceeds. 'The Catholic Church is always prepared to come to terms with any Government in the world. Pagan, tyrannical, dictatorial, republican, imperial, monarchical, the Church makes no distinction. She is concerned

¹ J. E. C. Bodley, *France*, pp. 408-9.

Democracy in France

solely for the souls of her children.' In practice things do not work out as simply as this. In a democracy there are opposing parties, and the Church allies herself with those which will protect her interests, material as well as spiritual. Most Liberals believe in secular education, and are inclined to be anti-clerical. The Church therefore sided with the French monarchists and the strong army party, both groups which despised the Chamber of Deputies. This unfortunate alliance was clearly marked at the time of the Dreyfus affair, which—apart from the 1914 war—was by far the most formidable event of the Third Republic, splitting the country from top to bottom.

The anti-Drefusards were the upholders of State prerogative, of the infallible Army and the infallible Church. They were the Nationalists and most of them were anti-Semites. On the other side were many ardent patriots, like Clemenceau, but they were men who believed in justice, in the exposure of scandals even when they implicated those in high places. It took over ten years, from 1894 to 1905, before the innocence of Dreyfus was finally established, and still longer before Colonel Picquart was reinstated. All this time the Clericals raged violently against the successive Republican Governments, and towards the end Pope Pius X was openly in conflict with the French Government. In 1904 he protested to the Powers because M. Loubet visited the King of Italy, and a struggle ensued which ended in the denunciation of the century-old Concordat, and a Bill of Separation. Relations between the Republic and the Church proved to be a continually disruptive force, preventing the natural development of parties divided according to their social and political idea and interests. Apart from this the clergy and the old Catholic aristocracy did their utmost directly to discredit the parliamentary system, an easy task when the standard of personal honesty was so low.

Europe's Dance of Death

It was said of medieval Rome that a visit to the city confirmed one's belief in the omnipotence of the Church. Only an organization of great strength could survive such corruption at the centre. Much the same can be said of the Third Republic. In spite of the perpetual scandals and crises the Government continued to function, and even acquired an enormous empire in the three decades before the 1914 war. The politicians allowed the equipment of the army to deteriorate, but its spirit remained excellent. The Quai d'Orsay carried through a fairly consistent, and extremely intelligent foreign policy. The people came to look upon public life in an amused and detached way which the Englishman finds hard to understand—*les sales bonshommes*—always up to their dirty little tricks. France is a very large country, Paris is a world of its own, and politics are just a stupid game. Perhaps Americans can understand this attitude more easily, for they themselves seem at times to take a curiously detached view of the vagaries of their politicians.

August 1914 showed at once the patience and soundness of the French character, the confidence, not altogether justified, of the army and its leaders, and the badness of the politicians. The Government, true to form, disappeared far too quickly to Bordeaux, from where it did little but hamper the work of Joffre and General Galliéni. Aristide Briand was the one notable figure emerging from the Chamber of Deputies until Clemenceau took charge in 1917. The socialist Jaurès, a fundamentally honest and forceful man, might have rallied the left wing parties if he had not been murdered. Poincaré, who had become President in 1913, was not a strong man, though he had, in the years immediately before the war, stood for the view that it was impossible to come to terms with Germany if that meant the permanent renunciation of Alsace-Lorraine. This is not the

Democracy in France

place to discuss either the personalities or the events of the war. It is enough to point out that the four years did nothing to alter the poor opinion which the French held of their politicians.

Although Poincaré and Millerand were to become great figures in the period after the war, their administration during it seems to have been faulty in the extreme. They were not strong or honest enough to prevent the development within the ministerial ranks of a horribly corrupt campaign in favour of a peace by surrender. The best that can be said for Poincaré is that he finally accepted Clemenceau. When Briand resigned in 1917 and M. Ribot formed his Cabinet the rot had already set in. A part of the army had mutinied, several politicians were intriguing with the enemy. It was only stopped by Clemenceau assuming dictatorial powers. The exact parts played by M. Malvy the Minister of the Interior, and M. Caillaux are still open to doubt. Both were tried and found guilty, the former sentenced to five years' banishment, the latter to two years' imprisonment. These cases revealed a most astounding collection of shady individuals closely connected with the French political leaders—Duval, arrested on his way back from Switzerland with a cheque for 100,000 francs, and shot; Senator Humbert, a noisy patriot who was found selling his newspaper to German agents; Lenoir, who was executed for his part in the scandal of the Russian loans; Bolo Pacha, a fraudulent adventurer who also took German money; Cavillini, his friend, who co-operated with Caillaux in Rome. A scabrous collection of human beings. The trials and the echoes of these scandals continued well into the 'twenties.

Although Clemenceau received the support of four hundred deputies in his determination to carry on a *guerre intégrale*, his premiership was really an assumption of dic-

Europe's Dance of Death

tatorial powers, with the support of the army and of the country. His success during the dark months at the beginning of 1918, when defeat was very near indeed, confirmed the French instinct that in war the political children must not be allowed to play their games. Though Clemenceau himself was afterwards to be broken, as the French break all their idols, though he was accused of losing the peace, and was not made President of the Republic, yet the lesson was not forgotten, and in 1939 Daladier received dictatorial powers without any serious questioning.

Democracy in France can hardly be said to have functioned during the 1914 war. It was equally ineffective in making peace. As in England the first General Election returned men who had promised to 'make Germany pay.' In each Chamber there was an overwhelming 'nationalist' majority. For five years, 1919 to 1924, France was ruled, first by Clemenceau, and then by the Bloc National. It was an unhappy period. No one could have given France all that the politicians had promised her. The people, as a whole, finished the war in an extremely optimistic mood, far more so than the English. They believed that they could ensure their future security and also get reparations from Germany on such a scale that they could rebuild their country. The history of the immediately post-war years is that of violent oscillations from one policy to another. As regards Germany, they could never, as Mr. Lloyd George put it, decide whether they wanted to cut the country into beafsteaks or to milk it. When the English would not follow them in a policy which seemed inconsistent the French decided that their allies had deserted her. They turned to America, but when reminded of the debt, they found a new enthusiasm for the League of Nations. When the League failed to do what they wanted, they began a series of Central European alliances. They drew a *cordon sanitaire* round

Democracy in France

Russia, and then began to make advances for closer co-operation with the Bolshevist regime.

The instability was made worse, as in England, by labour troubles. In both countries there was unemployment and dislocation, and in both countries the class which had done well out of the war promised to solve the difficulties by reparations. Clemenceau quarrelled with the profiteers by introducing an Eight Hours' day. They replied by accusing him of losing the peace. He became *Perd la Victoire* instead of *Père la Victoire*, and by 1920 he had retired from public life, an embittered man. The rich found a more suitable leader in Millerand, an ex-Socialist but a violent anti-Bolshevist. His warnings against the Russian 'man with the knife between his teeth' had played a considerable part in the 1919 election, and this pseudo-strong man dominated, typically enough, the next five years.

I shall not attempt to describe the confused negotiations which preceded and followed the Versailles Treaty. Both of the French hopes were foiled. She got neither security nor financial stability. Americans, and to a less extent the English, have been too ready to blame France for insistence on the first point. General Foch demanded the Left Bank of the Rhine, or a buffer state under French control. He foresaw the probability of a war of revenge within a generation. At that time the construction of fortifications along the entire frontier would hardly have seemed practical, and we still do not know if the Maginot line is impregnable. The soldier's realist point of view has been justified, but Clemenceau abandoned these claims for an Anglo-American convention which first America and then England subsequently denounced. Briand might have worked out a new form of guarantee, but his Government was overthrown shortly after the Cannes Conference, and Poincaré returned to the policy of direct action against Germany. France alone was

Europe's Dance of Death

responsible for the abortive separatist movement in the Rhineland, and for the occupation of the Ruhr, which cost her millions and only taught her that you cannot dig coal with bayonets.

By 1924 France, like England, had grown very tired of her war profiteers. In both countries Left Wing Governments were returned, and failed because of the impossible legacy they inherited. The *Cartel des Gauches* was a coalition. Unlike the British Labour party, it had a clear majority. It had, however, a far worse financial situation to face. The collapse of the Cartel—a Radical Government supported by the Socialists—throws some light on the working of French democracy. It illustrates two recurrent weaknesses—the difficulty of working the *bloc* system, and the sinister influences which can wreck governments from outside.

All Left Wing coalitions in France tend to be unstable. The progressive groups are more theoretical than the reactionary parties. They are also more sincere and less prepared to compromise than the groups on the Right Wing. The first Government, that under M. Herriot, survived with great difficulty for ten months. After it fell there were *six* successive Left Wing coalition Governments in fourteen months. Their failure was partly due to the shifting foundations on which they were built, but partly to the struggle against the Banks and the financial interests. Some account of these must be given. They remain to-day a potent factor in French politics.

The French industrial and financial magnates do not often go into Parliament. They hardly ever trouble to send their sons and cousins there. If France is a 'pluto-democracy' it is in a different sense from England. On the other hand, the outside control of the Government by a few individuals does seem to be extremely effective. We find most of the

Democracy in France

larger industries organized into cartels, of which the *Comité des Forges* is the oldest, dating from 1864, and is perhaps the best known. It groups some two hundred and fifty iron and steel companies, including Schneider, de Wendel, and other leading firms. Since 1919 the industrial employers have formed a new joint body, the *Confédération Generale de la Production Française*. The banks, also, have recently tended to amalgamate into four very large institutions, though a few banking houses continue independently. The heart of the whole system, financial and industrial, is the Bank of France, an institution as anomalous as the Bank of England, and even more powerful.

The Bank was founded by Napoleon, who imported some Swiss Protestants for the purpose. The descendants of these families still occupy five of the fifteen seats on the Board of Regents. Of the rest all except three are held by representatives of 'big business.' Three Regents are Treasury officials. This Board is the very quintessence of the 'Two Hundred Families' who are reputed to rule France. Here you will find men like the Marquis de Vogue, and de Wendel. Aristocracy which keeps clear of Parliament is well ensconced in the higher ranks of business. Readers of Proust may remember that the father of that super-aristocrat, the Marquis de Saint-Loup-en-Bray, was President of the Suez Canal Company, a position reserved for the key-men in finance. This tradition has continued unbroken since the early nineteenth century.

The most remarkable feature of this plutocracy, compared with French democracy, is its stability. In the last hundred and thirty years France has experienced three revolutions, has changed its political system five times, and its Government at least once a year. Yet throughout the whole period a few financial families, including the original Swiss bankers, like the Mallets and the Hottinguers, have continued to

Europe's Dance of Death

wield their great power unchanged. Usually they can exercise their authority by indirect methods applied to the extremely venal politicians who are brought to the head of the Government under the French system of democracy. From time to time they have had to struggle against a Government from the Left Wing. This was the case when the reactionary National Bloc was thrown out in 1924, after a period of extreme extravagance, and was replaced by the *Cartel des Gauches*.

The Cartel began to plan a number of domestic reforms, some of which upset the employers, and there began a remarkable contest between the Bank of France and the Government. The issues involved were complicated, but two stood out clearly. The Bank quite deliberately allowed the franc to deteriorate, first by refusing to use the Morgan Credits, and secondly by virtually treating the amounts owed the Bank by the Government as if they were bad debts. The result was a rapid fall in the exchange value of the franc from 67 to the pound sterling, when the Cartel took office, to about 240 when the Bank achieved their aim and Poincaré formed a new 'National' Government, a little over two years later. During that period seven Governments had fallen.

Herriot survived the longest, but unable to tackle the financial junta he was replaced by Caillaux, who had by then been more or less purged of his war-time scandals. He failed, and Painlevé followed, but only lasted a month. Then came Raoul Péret, and after him Caillaux once more. Caillaux won a small point, he got the Governor of the Bank changed, but the group was far too strong for him, and as a last attempt a Briand Government was formed. This failed and Herriot came back for a last round. The franc went down to 240. There was a general panic amongst the innumerable little *rentiers*. The Two Hundred Families had won.

Democracy in France

Poincaré formed a 'National' Government with a Cabinet containing six former Prime Ministers.

On the other side of the Channel, the Labour Government of 1924 had, as we have seen, an even shorter shrift. It lasted under a year. Its defeat was, however, mainly political, and MacDonald had given hostages to fortune by forming a Government without a clear majority in the Commons, and without any support in the Lords. There was no need for the plutocracy to bring up its heavy financial artillery. They could force an election at any time. Choosing a suitable moment they did so, winning an overwhelming victory with the help of the 'Zinoviev letter.' Different countries, different methods.

On the whole pluto-democracy functions easiest in England. All the efforts of the Bank of France had not prevented Herriot, helped for a time by the British Labour Government, from rushing through some part of his foreign policy. The Ruhr was evacuated, the Dawes reparations plan was accepted. The League of Nations might have been put on a solid basis by the Geneva Protocol, which was adopted by the League Assembly in October 1924. Soon afterwards the English reactionaries had turned out the Labour Government. The Conservatives, under Mr. Baldwin, rejected the Protocol *en bloc*. The Locarno Pact, for all its high hopes, was little more than a *pis aller*, the British method of 'keeping Germany quiet.' Herriot never thought much of it, but Briand was won over by Austen Chamberlain into believing that it was the beginning of a new era.

With Right Wing Governments in power, France and England settled down in 1926 to three peaceful years. This was a period of great prosperity, suggesting that Europe was returning to 'normality.' In retrospect it is clear that they were years of lost opportunity. Trade was brisk, and Europe shared to some extent in the boom years enjoyed by America.

Europe's Dance of Death

French exports reached a record figure in 1928-29, a great building scheme was pushed through, and the Finance Minister, M. Chéron, collected a surplus, part of which was spent in building the 'Maginot line.' Briand, at the Foreign Office, followed a policy of Franco-German reconciliation. His rapprochement with Stresemann culminated in the Thoiry programme—an abortive effort which might have saved Europe. In England Sir Austen Chamberlain worked on rather similar lines. He was helped by the British Ambassador in Berlin, the unprofessional but admirable Lord D'Abernon, but all of these men worked as if they had decades in which to carry out their schemes.

The years 1926-29 saw the last efforts of enlightened Conservatism to save Europe. It failed because the great majority of Conservatives, whether in England, France or Germany are never enlightened. They form a dead weight which drags back any progressive leader, slows down any progressive policy. One could illustrate this time and time again in the history of England's dealings with India and Ireland. The year 1929 was a turning point. It may be considered as the end of the old Europe, and from many points of view it was Briand's year. After that his life was tragedy, a failure intensified by illness and weakening mental force.

Let us consider for a moment what could be reckoned on the asset side in 1929. Germany's assent to the Young plan resulted in the final withdrawal of the Allies. Thus one great source of German bitterness and of friction with England ended in June. In July the Briand-Kellogg Pact was signed by some fifty-nine nations, and in those days—only ten years ago—we had not become completely cynical about treaties. Then in September Briand brought before the League of Nations his great plan for a 'United States of Europe,' a plan to which the Continent may yet have to return. It was taken seriously, and a committee was formed

Democracy in France

to study proposals for closer collaboration. In England the second Labour Government was in office, again without a majority in the Commons, but with the admirable Arthur Henderson as Foreign Minister.

On the debit side must be placed Stresemann's death. He left no one with sufficient influence to pull his country through the compromises and difficulties of appeasement with France. He was followed by the clever but academic Herr Brüning. Then came the 'World Slump,' the political effects of which were to be wholly disastrous in Europe. The depression, which began in the autumn of 1929, continued throughout the following two years, and included in its wreckage the English Labour Government, the Poincaré Government and the Young Plan. The last collapsed because payments had previously been made with money borrowed from the United States, and from London. Finally the year 1930 showed Europe, for the first time, the growing strength of Hitler's movement, which achieved a substantial success in the Reichstag elections. An economic storm has the same political effect as a war. It causes a swing to the right. In England a financial crisis brought about the formation of the 'National' Government under Mr. Baldwin. Soon afterwards it was returned at a General Election with an unhealthily large majority. In France the slump brought to power the reactionary Tardieu, whose Ministry was overthrown by another financial scandal—the Oustric affair. After a short period of instability the first Laval Cabinet was formed in 1931, and Briand's declining influence really came to an end. Most unfortunately he remained at the Foreign Office, the shade of a great name, while all real authority passed to that astute and sinister little Auvergnat, M. Laval. The Austro-German customs union, and the manner in which it was brought about, really killed Briand's policy of appeasement. He was defeated for the Presidency and then drifted

Europe's Dance of Death

back to Geneva, where everyone knew that he no longer represented France. His pilgrimage of peace was at an end. The last scene was the worst of all. Brüning, in a final attempt to meet the financial difficulties of his country, asked for help from England and France. It was refused, but Briand and Laval paid a visit to Berlin, the futility of which must have been of immense help to Hitler's ever-growing party.

The Tardieu-Laval regime was such a failure that the 1932 General Election saw an early reaction. While England remained tied up with a markedly Right-Wing Government, which was to survive until the present-day, the French entered upon a new era of confusion. In some respects the next two years resembled the unhappy period after 1924, but they were far more dangerous because of what was happening in Germany and Italy. The years which followed 1932 were to illustrate all those weaknesses of French democracy which have already been noted—the instability of a left-wing *bloc*, the hostile influence of the 'Two Hundred Families' on any radical Government, the constant recurrence of the worst kind of financial scandal, and the danger of the '*chantage de la rue*,' which began to develop into a struggle between two unparliamentary groups, the Fascists and the Communists. All this led up to the great crisis of French democracy which culminated in the riots of 1934.

The 1932 election suggests that in some ways the electorate in France is more intelligent than in England. It may not be the voters' fault that they are so badly served. The second ballot was held just after President Doumer had been murdered by a Russian lunatic. Tardieu and Millerand attempted to work up an anti-Russian scare on the lines of the successful 'Zinoviev letter' in England. It had not the least effect, and the final result may be given to show the relative strength of the parties when opinion swung to the left.

Democracy in France

Conservatives	..	109	(including the Marin group)
Popular Democrats	..	88	(including Tardieu and Flan- din's groups which later split)
Independent Radicals		62	
Republican Socialists		37	(The Briand group)
Radicals	..	157	
Socialists	..	129	
Pupistes	..	11	(Dissident Communists)
Communists	..	12	
			—
			605

A Radical-Socialist Government was formed under Herriot, but it was soon apparent that these two groups would never work well together. The Socialists, under M. Blum, had produced a programme which closely resembled that of the Popular front four years later. It included the forty-hour week, nationalization of armament firms, etc. Herriot was watching events on the other side of the Rhine, where the von Papen and Schleicher Governments were preparing the way for Hitler's Chancellorship. The Premier had been much impressed by those reports on German rearmament which Mr. Baldwin kept from the British public. A struggle between the claims of Security and Reform has always upset French left-wing *blocs*. On this occasion it was made worse by financial troubles. Herriot's Government fell on the question of paying an instalment of the American debt, an operation made harder by the Hoover Moratorium. Paul Boncour, who is best remembered for co-operating with Herriot in a Peace Plan, tried his hand at forming a Government and failed. Finally Daladier became Premier on the same day that Hitler was appointed German Chancellor.

Europe's Dance of Death

This last event might have quieted Blum's socialist conscience, especially after the collapse of the German Social Democrats had showed how a weak left wing group might fare in the face of a direct threat. It had no such effect, and for nine months Daladier held the balance between the financial interests outside Parliament demanding wage cuts, and the Socialists inside Parliament asking for the original programme on which the *bloc* had been formed. It was a hopeless struggle. Blum could not force Daladier to fight against the Bank of France and the Two Hundred Families in order to push through a series of laws which would worsen a critical financial position. Daladier resigned before the end of 1933. He was followed first by Sarraut, and then very soon afterwards by Chautemps—four Governments in less than two years.

The French politicians having displayed their usual instability, their inability to work together—especially on the Left—and the continuing influence of the Two Hundred Families, now proceeded to stage a first-class scandal. The Stavisky affair first came to public notice in January 1934. The right-wing newspaper, *Action Française*, began to report a great scandal at Bayonne, and to inculcate Chautemps and his Government. Stavisky was found shot on January 8th, just before arrest. It appeared that he had been released from prison in 1926, and had since then conducted a series of huge swindles, amounting to about two hundred million francs. It was painfully clear that most of his frauds had only been possible because he had influential friends in Parliament, in the judiciary, and in the police. Coming at a time when the French were worried over financial troubles, over the continual changes in the Government, and by events in Germany the Stavisky affair immediately played into the hands of Right-Wing organizations. Their numbers and influence had been growing ever since

Democracy in France

Hitler came to power. The most important of these were the Royalist *Camelots du Roi* and the purely Fascist *Croix de Feu*, led by a pretentious ex-officer, Colonel de la Rocque. A wave of anti-parliamentary feeling swept through Paris, and the cry '*À bas les voleurs*' was heard again.

February of 1934 probably marks the nadir of French democracy. For a fortnight the most appalling accusations were being bandied about in the Chamber. The Right Wing were delighted to have a scandal in which so many Left-Wing politicians seemed to be implicated. Undoubtedly some individual members, and almost certainly some of the party funds had benefited directly from Stavisky's largesse. The street campaign, to which Chiappe, the Prefect of Police, almost certainly lent his aid, combined with the attacks in Parliament were sufficient to drive Chautemps out of office, although he had still a majority, and no adverse vote had been passed. The *chantage de la rue* had won a notable victory, and the Constitution suffered a severe blow. President Lebrun called in M. Daladier to be the strong man and restore order.

This was by no means the end. Daladier was still of the Left, and the extreme Right, led by M. Henriot, were determined to undo the effects of the 1932 Election. When Daladier dismissed Chiappe—in a queerly illogical way, for he offered him the important post of Resident-General in Morocco—the Fascists arranged a demonstration which ended in the famous riot of February 6th. It was a direct attempt by the Right-Wing organizations to intimidate or overthrow Parliament. There was some firing by the troops, and about six were killed. The next day was marked by extreme disorder, and M. Daladier resigned. It was another victory for the 'street.'

The only real reply to the Fascist challenge came from the 'street' itself. On February 9th there were counter

Europe's Dance of Death

demonstrations by Communists and Socialists. Up to that time the two groups had been bitterly hostile. The Fascist demonstration taught them to work together. On the 12th Socialists and Communists joined in a march, and showed that they could then far outnumber the Fascists, but they were working men unable to keep up the continual pressure of the Fascists. The latter were recruited from the little bourgeoisie with a considerable mixture of the rich and aristocratic families who thus made their first entrance into French politics.

The next nine months saw no improvement in the method of carrying on the Government. A former President, M. Doumergue was recalled at the age of seventy-two to form a Cabinet, but he was a pompous mediocrity who owed much to the seamy side of politics. Colonel de la Rocque for once was accurate enough when he called the Doumergue Government 'a poultice on a gangrenous leg.' The new Premier was the last man in the world to restore the decencies of parliamentary life, or restore the authority of the Chamber of Deputies. Instead of repressing the growing insolence of the Fascist groups he attempted to get dictatorial powers from the Chamber, and to use the street blackmail in order to intimidate the Radicals. France and Europe owe much to the Mayor of Lyons, M. Herriot, who did much to rally the deputies. The special powers were refused. The Fascist threat was largely bluff, hardly a dog barked when the old premier resigned. The final scene of nine lamentable months was his appearance on the evening of his resignation, wearing a Fascist cap on his head, and in company with Colonel de la Rocque.

One result of these alarms and excursions in the streets, and of the unhappy constitutional disputes was to establish M. Laval more firmly at the Quai d'Orsay. When M. Flandin took over the Government, Laval—who might have been a

Democracy in France

candidate for the Premiership—made it clear that he preferred to remain in charge at the Foreign Office. A Cabinet drawn up on the 'party truce' basis was accepted by the Radicals and Socialists, who were delighted to have got rid of the Doumergue nightmare, and were deceived by the temporary effacement of the Croix de Feu.

Such was the position when France faced the momentous year 1935, after sixty-five years of republican rule. Democracy had provided a stop-gap Cabinet representing no special point of view, a Parliament which was still widely discredited, a Foreign Minister carrying on an extremely tortuous policy of appeasement of which the country knew very little. Inside the Chamber of Deputies there were no new men on whom France could call, the Cabinets must just be a reshuffling of the old names. Outside Parliament there were forces, luckily weakly led, which were ready to ally themselves with any reactionary group to blackmail the Government. They had their uniformed followers, and a powerful Press. The continual revelations of the Stavisky case made the Fascists' task very easy, and there was always a temptation for a Minister to get their support when he wished to coerce his colleagues in the Cabinet. Laval was to make use of them in this way. Such was 'pluto-democracy' in France when Mussolini and then Hitler began to play at 'power politics,' using their dictatorial authority to plunge their countries into any venture which they might think fit.

Collapse of German Democracy

There is a curious resemblance between the origins of the Third Republic in France and of the first republic in Germany. Both were founded after a major defeat, which left the country divided, dispirited, and reduced in territory. In each case the population accepted the new arrangement, which was intended to continue until peace was negotiated but which was not expected to last. Neither country showed any general enthusiasm for democracy or had objected strongly to personal rule. France had accepted Napoleon III without much demur, and had endured from him a good deal of bad government and some risky foreign ventures before he led the country into a disastrous war. Germany had followed the Hohenzollerns faithfully. The Reichstag, though nominally a democratic body, had no traditional urge to curtail the royal prerogatives. Parliament had never, as in England, obtained control over the army and foreign affairs by constitutional precedents and the power of the purse. An omnipotent elective assembly was an exotic idea to most Germans in 1919, just as it had been to most Frenchmen in 1871.

The parallel may be taken a little further. The newly elected representatives began by undertaking two most invidious tasks. They had to suppress popular movements at home, and accept an imposed peace which involved loss of

Collapse of German Democracy

territory and the transfer of property. The first duty of Thiers was to attack Paris, and crush the Commune. His next was to accept the Peace of Frankfurt—an entirely unilateral Treaty which took Alsace-Lorraine from France, and involved the payment of reparations. The first task of President Ebert was to repress the Spartacists, which Noske accomplished only too thoroughly, and the next was to accept the Treaty of Versailles. This was an imposed peace considerably more drastic than Frankfurt. Alsace-Lorraine was returned to France, new States were formed on territory that had been partly German as well as Austrian. Germany had to abandon her colonies, and hand over large quantities of ships, armaments and rolling stock. She was also presented with a huge bill for reparations.

The first Government, in each case, was undertaken by men who might be described as belonging to the Left Centre. Most of them corresponded to the Liberals of England before 1914. They were essentially men of peace, but they had hardly begun work before they had to flee from the capital under threat of armed force. In both cases the infant Republics returned in triumph. Ebert came back from Stuttgart after the Kapp *putsch*, just as forty-nine years earlier Thiers had returned to Paris from Versailles.

The reactionary elements also behaved in a similar way. They showed their limited patriotism by holding aloof from the Government in its early days, apart from encouraging the suppression of extreme Left Wing organizations—the Commune and the Spartacists. As soon as the Treaties had been accepted the Conservatives and Monarchists began to belabour the Government for the misfortunes into which their countries had fallen. They intrigued for the re-establishment of absolute rule. There is a close parallel between MacMahon's attempt to assume autocratic power, and the election of Hindenburg to the Presidency in

Europe's Dance of Death

1925, except that the German reactionaries won while the French reactionaries failed.

The middle-class Liberal, though often the salt of the earth, has always suffered from being too tender-minded. He accepts unpleasant tasks, acquires all the odium of carrying them through conscientiously, and then has to watch his work being undone. Both the French and German Republics began life under the control of mild middle-class men who felt themselves on the defensive, and adopted a much too apologetic attitude. The word Republic was not introduced into the French Constitution until 1875, and then only by a majority of one vote. The German Constitution also reflected the doubts and mixed feelings of the early republicans. Drawn up in 1919 it is over-loaded with articles which are little more than pious but vague aspirations. Other articles are obviously replies to sections of the Treaty of Versailles. The really important question, that of 'ultimate authority,' seems never to have been properly thrashed out by the makers of either Constitution. The French Constitution, as we have seen, gives almost unlimited authority to the President with the result that it has since been drastically curtailed by precedent. The German Constitution, by Article 48, also gave the President the right of assuming dictatorial powers, without any effective limitation. Here the history of the two Republics diverged. Though Hindenburg, from age and inability, never became a dictator, his great constitutional powers made it far easier for Hitler to assume complete autocratic powers.

It is not surprising that constitutions drafted under such difficult conditions should have contained undesirable features, or that the Republics so engendered should have had chequered careers. The French Third Republic has survived till to-day, nearly seventy years, but it has been

Collapse of German Democracy

neither a very healthy nor a happy life. The German First Republic only lived for fourteen years, and then was strangled deliberately and brutally.

It was a tragedy for Europe that the Treaty of Versailles was forced upon the decent middle- or working-class Germans who were left by the Junkers to form the first Government. If we had bullied the Kaiser, Hindenburg and Ludendorff, forcing them to accept and take home to their people such sacrifices, then democracy might have developed more healthily. President Wilson had much to do with the hasty formation of a democratic Government in time to negotiate the peace. He certainly gave the impression that the Germans would thereby get better terms. The Germans felt themselves doubly deceived and they vented their ill-feeling on Ebert, the saddler, Bauer, the trade union leader, Scheidemann, the tailor, and all the *kleinburgerlich* men who were in charge. These unfortunate Social Democrats had to face a solid block of reactionaries on one side, and the Communists on the other. To some extent they succeeded. With army help they put down the Communist rising at Munich, and in March 1920 the Ebert-Bauer Government met, with the help of the trade unions, the far more dangerous challenge from the army and Junkers—the Kapp *putsch*. The circumstances surrounding both these risings suggest that in the early years of the republic the trade unions and the army were the only organized forces in Germany. It never came to a direct struggle between the two. The Communists did not have much trade union support, and were easily put down by the army. The Kapp *putsch*, though supported by Ludendorff and General von Lüttwitz, did not win over the Reichswehr, and the general strike, called by Bauer, was sufficient to bring the badly organized attempt to an end. Kapp himself fled to Sweden. Superficially it might have seemed that the Republic was well established between

Europe's Dance of Death

these two conflicting interests. Unfortunately this was far from being the case.

The Kapp *putsch* showed that there was a powerful body of opinion bitterly opposed to the Republic, and that this body could count on plenty of public support. The attitude of the *Reichswehr* was one of neutrality, often of benevolent neutrality, towards Kapp and his confederates. The citizen's army, the *Einwohnerwehr*, proved a lamentable failure. The Republic was really saved by men like General von Seeckt, who hated it, but who knew that the army and the reactionary elements in Germany were not yet ready. Both had to be far better organized before they could act. Seeckt was an important figure in post-war Germany. Like Baron von Stein, a century before, he set himself to build up a force which would fight for what he believed to be German freedom. In the end he was intrigued out of office, and exiled, but he was the leader of those officers who all through the 'twenties were building the solid foundations on which Hitler raised his pretentious and shoddy edifice.

It is unfortunate that, in the 1939 war, France and England should have both tended to treat Hitlerism as if it was a new phenomenon. Anyone who, like myself, had to work in Germany during the decade after the war watched the continuous development of a powerful anti-republican party, reactionary in sentiment, and always striving to revive the glorious Germany of 1914. The landowners of Prussia, especially of East Prussia were solidly reactionary. They carried with them a very large number of peasants, for much of Germany is still feudal in outlook. The big industrialists were less certain in their allegiance. In their hearts they were all against the Republic, but some of them supported the policy of 'fulfilment.' The French occupation of the Ruhr drove the doubtful ones to the extreme Right,

Collapse of German Democracy

and Hitler in the end came to terms with them as he did with the *Reichswehr* officers.

Two very important groups amongst the early opponents of the Republic were the officials and the teachers. The most casual traveller in pre-war Germany must have noticed that it was a bureaucratic country. The State was all-powerful, and omnipotent. The Germans, who like everybody to be well labelled, attached a sonorous title to even the humblest official. 'Dressed in a little brief authority' the deputy sub-assistant postmaster became a personality. The *Beamte* suffered financially from the inflation which began slowly after 1920 and then became an avalanche. All the bitterness of the fixed wage-earner was concentrated on the Republic. Also the official is at heart a snob. He likes his superiors to belong to the ruling class, to have the 'von' or 'zu' before their names, which suggests, often falsely, a landed connection. They were irked by the presence of saddlers, tailors and others in the Ministries. They were only won over to Nazism after Hitler had come to terms with the Nationalists, and when they discovered the close connection between anti-semitism and quick promotion.

The academic profession is, in Germany, little more than an extension of the bureaucracy. The professors and teachers had the same reasons for disliking the Republic, but there was also a tradition amongst them of extreme chauvinism, which dates back to the latter part of the nineteenth century. Every university was a little focus of Nationalism in which the crudities of Treitschke and Bernhardi were developed and expanded. Generation after generation of intense, uncritical and humourless, vigorous young men were taught to glorify war, to place discipline higher than freedom of thought, to believe that *Deutschtum* has some mystical quality which must be forced upon the world, to despise democracy as a sign of weakness, and to believe in a mass of

Europe's Dance of Death

wholly unscientific racial and class theories. Unfortunately the German youth is the easiest in the world to organize. He has a positive mania to 'belong,' to be herded together with his own kind. This instinct, which Hitler was to exploit so successfully later, had already been at work inside every school and college, reducing the educated classes to a disciplined herd, with their opinions already *gleichgeschaltet*, or reduced to a level.

The Nationalist teachers had no difficulty in making life unbearable to any of their colleagues who did not conform. The students could be trusted to help in the task of driving out any hapless individual who showed pacifist or republican tendencies, especially if he also happened to be a Jew.

Mr. Edgar Mowrer, for whose opinion I have the greatest respect, blames the Democrats because they did not immediately accept the challenge, and fight these reactionary groups. 'What can be said,' he asks, 'for a Republic that allows its laws to be interpreted by Monarchist judges, its Government to be administered by old-time functionaries brought up in fidelity to the old regime; that watches passively while reactionary school teachers and professors teach its children to despise the present freedom in favour of a glorified feudal past; that permits and encourages the revival of the militarism that was chiefly responsible for the country's previous humiliation?'¹

There is, of course, very little to be said for such a Republic, but my mind goes back to those early days. I try to put myself in the place of the Social Democrat leaders, like Ebert, Bauer and Müller, or of the more 'Centre' and middle-class politicians who followed them—men like Fehrenbach and Simons, who formed a short-lived Government in 1921, and Dr. Wirth, who then became Chancellor. I remember my visits to the trade union headquarters, and

¹ Edgar Mowrer, *Germany Puts the Clock Back*.

Collapse of German Democracy

the decent but elderly and cautious officials who were so like their counterparts on the Labour Party benches in the House of Commons. I was left with an impression of tired and disillusioned men, carrying on a hopeless task with extraordinary little vocal popular support. Their friends were at work all day, were not accustomed to expressing themselves, and at most could be called out occasionally to march through the streets, or—as at the time of the Kapp *putsch*—to go on strike.

Suppose someone *had* risen from the pro-republican parties and led a real attack on the Nationalists, what would have been his prospects? There was a moment, after the murder of Rathenau, when it seemed that Dr. Wirth might have started such a campaign. The murderers were three young officers from Ehrhardt's 'Brigade,' an illegal organization which had taken part in the Kapp *putsch*, and still remained active in Bavaria. The complicity of certain Nationalist members of the Reichstag was clear, and I was in the Reichstag when Dr. Wirth turned on them as the enemies of his country—*Der Feind steht rechts*. But Dr. Wirth was, by training and instinct, a professor of economics, a reasonable human being of liberal tendencies. Looking down at the solid, tight-lipped Junkers, I felt that only a man without much *Feinheit*, a tough, ruthless man prepared for a little spilling of blood, could have hoped to succeed against these reactionaries. He would first have to organize his support. Apart from the workers the rest of the country were hostile or apathetic.

It was only necessary to consider each stage in the campaign to see why Dr. Wirth would never undertake it. The first attack would have been upon the Junker element, and the natural process would have been to divide up their estates, and at the same time to expropriate all the former Royalties, including the Kaiser, who held property in

Europe's Dance of Death

Germany. This would have had to be done without any popular movement from the peasantry such as was responsible for the 'green revolution' in Russia and parts of the Balkans, and for the agrarian reforms in Spain, which have now, alas, been reversed. The next stage in the campaign, and it would have had to have been almost simultaneous, would have been the purging of the civil service, and the teaching profession, and the replacement of many army officers, especially of the higher ranks. Who were to take their places? The cadre of officers was entirely filled by men who had been through the army training, a discipline which can only be endured by those who accept its tenets, and these were laid down in monarchical times. The officials and professors were almost equally solid. In all three professions the purge would have had to remove about half the personnel, to have had any real effect. There were no educated classes, apart from the Jews, who could have been called upon to fill the vacancies, and whose loyalty to the Republic would have been relied upon. As it was the Republic did bring a good many Jews into the bureaucracy, a policy which greatly increased the already powerful and general anti-semitism.

Even if the means to act had been available and the risk had not seemed too great, I am doubtful whether the will existed amongst most of the political leaders. There were two features of the Treaty of Versailles which seemed to have united almost every German into a conspiracy of opposition. These were the reparations and the disarmament clauses. Dr. Wirth made it clear when he accepted office that he only advocated 'fulfilment' because he believed that by trying to fulfil the Allies' demands, he would prove their impossibility. Far more dangerous was the unavowed intention of all Ministers to evade their agreements about reducing the army. Whatever changes might occur in the

Collapse of German Democracy

Government, Gessler remained at the Ministry of War, and von Seeckt stayed as Chief of the General Staff. A long line of Chancellors flitted quickly through Wilhelmstrasse—Scheidemann, Bauer, Fehrenbach, Wirth, Marx and Cuno—but they only formed a kind of *Schattenspiel*, carrying on their shadowy negotiations with the Allies. Behind the curtain sat the men who were trying to rebuild, not a new Germany, but the old Germany. At no time did the army ever have difficulty in obtaining all the money it needed from the Government, at no time did the Courts fail to punish severely any German who disclosed secret activities contrary to the Treaty of Versailles, and no Government put down the semi-military societies such as the Steel Helmet League, Blücher Union, Bismarck Union, Viking Society, etc., in which thousands of young men received a rapid voluntary army training.

If the politicians were not willing to fight the militarist and reactionary elements they could perhaps justify themselves on the ground that they had received no mandate from the electorate for any such drastic action. The first elections were held in 1919. The basis was universal suffrage, and over eighty per cent of the thirty-five million men and women voters went to the poll. The proportional representation system was adopted, and the result was the emergence of six groups on whose party lists the votes were taken. The parties naturally adopted quasi-democratic names. Thus the Catholic group called itself the Centre Party, and its eighty-eight members remained as an amorphous and not wholly political section. The Junkers adopted the title of the National People's Party, and the industrialists that of the German People's Party. Both were monarchist and anti-republican, and they gained forty-two and twenty-one seats respectively. The Democrats were a middle-class Liberal party, largely Jewish, and they had

Europe's Dance of Death

seventy-five members. the Majority Socialists were the biggest single section with one hundred and sixty-three seats, the more extreme Independent Socialists only gaining twenty-two.

A division along the lines of Socialists versus bourgeois parties was not possible, and the early Cabinets were drawn from the two Centre and the Majority Socialist parties. These coalitions always contained a nucleus of safe and solid men, who had their connections amongst the business men, and whose sons would be unhappy if they could not describe themselves as Reserve Officers. Each successive Cabinet tended to move its centre of gravity more and more to the Right. Cuno's Government, in particular, was heavily weighted with business men and employers.

The next election, held in May 1924, was even less decisive than the first. The list of parties began to extend, to the Left and Right. The Communists and the National Socialists, though both theoretically forbidden, secured sixty-two and thirty-two seats respectively. The Majority Socialists lost about sixty. The tendency for an ever-widening range of parties was to continue throughout the lifetime of the Republic. It was an unhealthy symptom, tending to instability in the Government, and to indifference on the part of the electors who found themselves towards the end with a choice of eighteen parties, and a number of little 'family groups.' Another unhealthy symptom was a marked increase in the anti-Republican vote, with the Nationalists at one end and the Communists at the other. Socialists and bourgeois Republicans, weakened in numbers and divided in policy, were exposed to attack from both flanks.

The unpopularity of the Republic was closely connected with the policy of inflation. I use the word 'policy' deliberately. I was in Berlin throughout the worst part of the inflationary period, when the mark sank from a few

Collapse of German Democracy

thousands to the pound sterling until it ceased to have any value in terms of foreign exchange. I have never doubted that the inflation was deliberate, and that it was the result of a policy which emanated from the strong Nationalist elements amongst the bankers and industrialists. On this point I am glad to find myself in agreement with Mr. Daniels,¹ who was correspondent of the *London Times* at that time. He considered the inflation as an example of the ruthlessness of the German ruling classes towards individuals.

Probably the chief begetter of the policy was Herr Helfferich, who was considered as the financial genius of the Nationalists. He had played a prominent part in the financing of the Baghdad railway scheme before 1914. During the war he had been Finance Minister, and right up to the end had budgeted as if a German victory was inevitable. Associated with him was Hjalmar Schacht, who became well known abroad some years later as financial adviser to Hitler. In the matter of inflation as in that of rearmament it was possible to trace a continuous German policy, intensely Nationalist, which was carried on quite apart from the changing coalition Governments.

The process of inflation was painfully simple. The Government made no attempt to balance its budget, did not trouble to collect taxes from earned incomes, heavily subsidized travel and freights on the State railways, spent lavishly on public buildings, helped financially a number of private undertakings, and organized a passive resistance movement when the French moved into the Ruhr. All the time the Government printed more and more paper, in order to pay its way.

The Majority Socialists, together with the great mass of poorer Germans, accepted the inflation as if it was an act of providence, or rather of providence combined with the

¹ H. G. Daniels, *The Rise of the German Republic*.

Europe's Dance of Death

malignity of their former enemies, especially of France. The policy provided everything which the Nationalists wanted. It brought discredit on the Weimar system, and on the 'men of the fulfilment' who had tried to carry out the Treaty of Versailles. It cleared the State of its enormous internal debts, and it brought about a huge transference of real wealth from the non-producing to the producing classes. (Inflation helps the mortgagor—for instance, a factory-owner, merchant or hotel-keeper—at the expense of the mortgagee, who may belong to any profession, but in this transaction is merely a rentier. It assists the business man and employer at the expense of the workers, whose wages lag slowly after the rising prices. The agriculturist, on the whole, gains by inflation and rapidly rising prices.)

Another advantage was that the policy brought huge sums of totally unearned foreign exchange into Germany. All over Europe and Asia people bought marks as an investment. I once found a great heap of them in the Tangier *sok*. Indian merchants bought them during the Civil Disobedience movement because they believed that it was an anti-British gesture. British clergymen and spinsters put their savings into marks, because they believed that the industrious Germans would never default. The head of a British banking concern, Mr. Reginald McKenna, has estimated that the total amount of marks bought by foreigners or taken by them as credits, and then completely wiped out by inflation, amounted to about 7,000 million *gold* marks, or the equivalent of nearly £400 million. It was a magnificent booby-trap on the grand scale.

The chief sufferers from the policy were the working classes. Their weak and poor-spirited trade unions were totally unable to insist on wages rising in proportion to prices, or to obtain a gold-mark wage system. There was a time-lag of some weeks in wages, and also in the salaries of

Collapse of German Democracy

officials. A smaller but extremely vocal class were the educated men and women on fixed incomes, and the academic class whose subjects had no commercial value. (The professor of chemistry could insist on his salary being raised, where the professor of Sanskrit could not.)

It would be difficult to exaggerate the part played by Bavaria in the destruction of the Republic. From the first they were the recalcitrant State, refusing to take action against the avowed enemies of the Central Government, conniving at armed Nationalist organizations and continually invoking its federal rights in order to weaken the authority of the Chancellor. From Bavaria came the two young army officers who murdered Erzberger and the three naval officers who shot Rathenau, in June 1922. The instigators were well-known Nationalists, and the assassination was financed by a business man, but Bavaria provided a safe base for any political murder campaign. It is significant, in view of subsequent events, that Bavaria always stressed its 'National-Christianity' as opposed to the 'international-Marxism' of Berlin. It is impossible to acquit the southern Catholics of some complicity in these early struggles against the Republic.

Two leaders were already active, and had learnt to take advantage of the peculiar Bavarian mentality. The first was Dr. von Kahr. He had the support of the aristocracy, and his aim was the restoration of the old order and with it the old ruling House of Wittelsbach. The other leader was Adolf Hitler. He called his party the National-Socialists, and at that time he was violently anti-Communist, but not necessarily anti-Republican. He only opposed the existing Government, which he accused of being Marxist and Jewish. His followers were mostly men of no standing, but he had one notable supporter in Ludendorff. The General was then considered to be eccentric to the verge of madness, and

Europe's Dance of Death

nobody took his worship of Thor any more seriously than they did his other religious and political views. Many of his ideas have, however, been incorporated in the Nazi philosophy.

The neighbouring State of Saxony had a Labour Government, and was as Socialist as Bavaria was Nationalist. The industrial workers of Saxony had played a leading part in the strike which stopped the Kapp *putsch*. For this reason the different treatment meted out to the States in 1923 was a measure of the rapidity with which the Nationalists and the army had already got control. Stresemann had formed his first Government in August of that year. This in itself meant a considerable move to the Right, for Stresemann was a Nationalist, and his connections were with the big industrialists. He did, however, from 1923 onwards, 'play the Republican game' and even, shortly before he died, seemed to be qualifying to be considered as a 'Good European.' His first Cabinet was based on a very broad coalition, and included four Socialists, but it was understood that Stresemann was to play the part of the strong man, who would liquidate the struggle in the Ruhr, stabilize the mark, and settle differences with Bavaria and Saxony.

These three objects were not only difficult in themselves, but likely to cause an upheaval in the country. Three Generals were accordingly appointed to command the *Reichswehr* and exercise dictatorial powers in the States of Bavaria, Saxony and Thuringia. General Müller in Saxony used his power to dismiss the Saxon Government, make a military occupation of the country, and shoot a number of civilians. In Bavaria the local Government was allowed to form a local and rival dictatorship under the egregious Dr. von Kahr. He defied the Central Government, and impounded the Reichsbank gold. The General appointed by Stresemann refused to obey the orders of the Chancellor,

Collapse of German Democracy

and it seemed as if Bavaria was going to set up a separate monarchist State under Prince Rupprecht, with the tacit consent of the Central Government.

This was actually defeated by the rival activities of Hitler who wished to emulate his hero Mussolini and march on Rome. He was not interested in Bavarian monarchy, and was personally hostile to Dr. von Kahr, who had always treated him *de haut en bas*. Ludendorff declared for Hitler, but most of the semi-military organizations, such as Ehrhardt's brigade, preferred the monarchist group. There was an undignified demonstration organized by Hitler, which was dispersed by a small force of *Reichswehr* and police. Hitler stampeded, leaving his unfortunate lieutenant Röhm to surrender with his men. (Röhm was the old comrade of Hitler who was shot in the 1934 purge.) Hitler's debacle brought an end also to Dr. von Kahr's effort. It was all premature, and it was in the nature of things that General von Seeckt took charge and restored order.

These events were a great triumph for General von Seeckt, and for the army which he had been secretly building up and equipping. The German Republic now began to take a new shape. The Nationalists had learnt that the Republic was not yet ripe to be destroyed by force, and under Stresemann's leadership they began to operate the political machine. They tended to draw off voters from the Centre parties. This was shown in the second of the two Reichstag elections, both held in 1924. The country was beginning to split into two large groups, about equal in numbers. One section wanted to get back to the old Germany. They regarded the Republic merely as a stop-gap. The other part of the population were prepared to accept the Republic as a permanency, even if they had little enthusiasm for its existing form.

The different political groups remained, and new ones

Europe's Dance of Death

were added, but behind the rather vapid and superficial politics of the Reichstag the old form of German life began to emerge. The two main subjects—foreign affairs, and the fighting services—were gradually removed from the sphere of party politics, just as they had been in the time of the Kaiser. Even the Socialists seemed to have been quite ready to leave these vital questions in the hands of the Nationalists, as if they were the residuary legatees of the old regime. We have seen how the rebuilding of the army had from the first been left to Gessler and Seeckt. Similarly Stresemann from 1923 until his death in 1929 remained at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, establishing a position rather like that of Briand in France. It is true that Stresemann was not a conventional Nationalist, and was frequently at loggerheads with his old party, most of whom opposed Locarno and the German entrance into the League. But he remained, as his letters show, a Nationalist at heart, one who accepted the Republic as a temporary interregnum before his country could return to the autocratic and Monarchist Government which he believed suited it best.

During the latter half of the 'twenties the Republic remained poised in a kind of unstable equilibrium, supported on one side by people who were prepared to let it fall whenever it suited them. The division of the country was shown very clearly when Ebert died in 1925. At first a number of candidates went to the poll, including the indomitable Ludendorff who appeared as a National-Socialist or Nazi at the bottom of the list. As no one had a clear majority it was necessary, under the constitution to have a second ballot, at which new candidates could be brought forward. The Democrats and Socialists decided to put forward Marx, who had been Chancellor, and was regarded as a moderate. The Right felt that no one that they could put forward would be likely to defeat this candidate of the centre. The

Collapse of German Democracy

Nationalists then had an inspiration. They would bring Hindenburg back to public life, and persuade him to stand.¹

The Marshal was then seventy-eight, and had been living for some years in retirement at Hanover. He was known to be a fervent Monarchist, was suspected of having been privy to the Kapp *putsch*, and had done much to further the idea that the German army had never been defeated, but had been 'stabbed in the back' by treacherous politicians. This unhappy phrase seems to have originated from an English general who was with the British Military Mission in Berlin. It will not bear examination, but it became a kind of shibboleth for all good patriots.

A careful study of Hindenburg's life will probably convince any impartial person that the Marshal was not a strong character. He was essentially, as Bismarck said of Lord Salisbury, 'a wooden lath painted to look like iron.' In the crises of his life he seems to have depended on other's guidance. His huge bulk and magnificent presence were deceptive. He seems to have had quite a mediocre brain, and by 1925 this already showed marked signs of senile decay. His limitations were well known amongst the leading army officers. but to the people he was a legendary figure, and he would obviously be a redoubtable candidate if he could be persuaded to stand.

The Hindenburg legend owed much to the battle of Tannenberg, for which Ludendorff probably ought to have the credit. But Hindenburg, all through his life, had the knack of acquiring merit for others' work, and his appearance, so satisfying to every German, made it natural for legends and stories to cluster round him. For one thing all

¹ For an admirable account of the Marshal's life, especially after he had become President, see Mr. J. W. Wheeler-Bennett's *Hindenburg, The Wooden Titan*. I should like to express my indebtedness to this work for certain details contained in the later parts of this chapter.

Europe's Dance of Death

Germany was thankful to him. Although his behaviour at the end of the war is open to criticism, of this the country knew little. What they did know was that he remained in Germany, going quietly to his house in Hanover, when so many leaders fled abroad. The Kaiser signed an abdication and disappeared into Holland. Ludendorff escaped to Sweden with a forged passport and wearing green spectacles. Von Tirpitz shaved off his famous forked beard and slipped abroad. Ballin shot himself. Hindenburg gained immense *kudos* by staying at home. To many he was the chief link with the old Germany which seemed so prosperous and happy in retrospect.

At first the old man absolutely refused to be drawn from his retirement. The Nationalists then sent Von Tirpitz to talk him over. The cunning old Admiral, like some wily Ulysses dealing with an aged Nestor, touched the Marshal at his two weakest spots—his pride and his sense of duty. He persuaded Hindenburg that all Germany wanted him, that his selection would be almost unanimous and that above all it was his duty to the country to accept nomination. The final plea did the trick. After some further searching of his conscience, he agreed to stand for the Presidentship, in spite of his known anti-Republic views.

The voting, in spite of what Tirpitz had promised, turned out to be remarkably even.

Hindenburg	..	..	14,655,766
Marx	..	..	13,751,615
Thälmann	..	..	1,931,151

The Marshal had not even got a clear majority, but this was not necessary on the second ballot. We shall therefore never know whether his election was due to the intervention of the Communist candidate.

The figures are interesting from another point of view.

Collapse of German Democracy

In so many European countries the population seems to be very evenly divided between those who wish to be brought under authority, and those who want to retain their freedom of opinion, and their voice in the conduct of affairs. Amongst the first are usually to be found the aristocracy, the land-owners, the industrialists, the army and naval officers and most officials. These seem able to pull over to their side many of the less fortunate members of society. Thus Hindenburg owed his election to the country districts. In many parts of Prussia the peasants voted with their feudal lords, the Junkers. The Marshal must also have collected a large ex-servicemen's vote, and also that of the totally non-political people, like the peasant girl who thought that the baton he held in his photograph was a candle, so that he must be a good Christian. Everything considered, the size of the vote against Hindenburg was very impressive, and suggests that in 1925 the majority of the people did not want to go back to the old Germany.

The Nationalist leaders had pulled off a remarkably clever *coup*. They knew it would be very difficult for any ordinary politician to replace Hindenburg, and they hoped the old man would go on living long enough to bridge the gap until they could restore the monarchy. In the meantime he would be a magnificent figure-head, continually reminding people of the great days before 1914. They also hoped that in any crisis his strong bias towards the Right would be invaluable.

For a time things did not quite go as they hoped. The new President had a strong sense of duty. Having taken his oath of allegiance to the Republic he was determined to act constitutionally. His mind, though incapable of understanding the implications of Stresemann's foreign policy, did not deteriorate altogether until about 1929. At first he was much under the influence of his secretary Meissner, who was a keen supporter of Stresemann. For the first three or four

Europe's Dance of Death

years it seemed as if the extreme Monarchists might have been hoist with their own petard, and the Republic might acquire a permanent stability under Hindenburg. This was the epoch of Austen Chamberlain in England, and Briand in France, or reasonable Conservatism in foreign affairs, and Stresemann mellowed in this atmosphere. Reasonable Conservatism failed, but for a time it looked as if it might succeed.

Changes were going on inside the Monarchist party, and amongst the army leaders. Seeckt's policy was now being challenged. He had always advocated close relations with Russia, a liaison with the Red General Staff had been the essence of his plan. Russia, independent and unshackled by the Treaty of Versailles, could help Germany with munitions, while Germany could help Russia with technical advisers. It may be interesting to recall that in February 1920, Seeckt formally put forward to his staff his plans for a renewal of the war. The troops in the West would retire behind the Weser or the Elbe, but in the East they would join hands with the Russian army, launch an offensive against Poland, and having crushed that country would march westwards. In 1922 at Rapallo, Rathenau signed an agreement with Russia which officially recognized the relations between the two general staffs. The friendly connection between the two armies continued for some years, and in 1926 a further pact of friendship was signed at a time when it was felt that Germany's entrance into the League might endanger their relationship. It is only because people's memories are so short that the German-Russian agreement of 1939 was considered as if it was a complete reversal of policy. It was a return to the old Monarchist policy of Seeckt.

The challenge to Seeckt came from some of the younger officers in the army, notably that sinister intriguer, General

Collapse of German Democracy

von Schleicher, who played an ignoble but important part in the next few years. Like von Papen, with whom he often worked, he loved power, and his motives were chiefly personal. So far as he had a policy it was a conviction that the Right could only succeed with the help of a popular movement. The Russian connections of Seeckt might and in fact did win some support from the Communists, but these were a small body, and could hardly be expected to work with the Junkers, however much they both might hate Poland.

Schleicher, whose name exactly fitted his methods, got rid of both Seeckt and Gessler by the simple process of giving away to the Left wing Press certain secret activities of the War Office, which had come to his knowledge as a staff officer, and which were quite indefensible under the Treaty of Versailles. Both resigned and were replaced by Gröner and Hammerstein, who were friends of Schleicher. The way was now clearer for co-operation with Alfred Hugenberg, the newspaper and film magnate, who had become leader of the Nationalist Party, and was gradually ousting the steadier, old-fashioned men like Count Westarp and Treviranus. It was a victory for the 'wild men' of the party, who began to attack Stresemann with the utmost violence, and with that personal scurrility which was a mark of German as much as of French politics. It is possible that if England and France had gone further and faster to meet the reasonable demands of Stresemann he might have held his party, but the successive compromises and failures, the delay of getting a seat on the League Council, and the terms of the Young Plan offered marvellous opportunities for propaganda against 'Fulfilment.'

The first electoral effort of the new Nationalist leaders was not successful. Hugenberg went into the 1928 General Election with every intention of exploiting the personal

Europe's Dance of Death

popularity of the President and the difficulties which Stresemann was endeavouring to overcome. Just as the Conservative party in England will sometimes exploit the friendly loyalty to the Crown, so Hugenberg used his great advertising resources to tell the people that 'A Vote for the Nationalists is a Vote for Hindenburg.' It may be well to remind those who believe that Hitler saved his country from the edge of an abyss, that the 1928 election was quite peaceful. The people refused to be panicked by Hugenberg. The Nationalist vote dropped, and the Socialists gained several seats. The National Socialists, exploiting every kind of national discontent, only collected 800,000 supporters. It was after this election, and the formation of a coalition Government under the Socialist Müller, that the Nationalists began to ally themselves with the semi-military bodies like the *Stahlhelm*, and also with Hitler and the National Socialists. Hugenberg's private resources were poured into the latter organization during 1929. This was the year when Stresemann died, his work incomplete, and the country beginning to feel the effects of the world slump. The Nationalists did their best to bring Hindenburg on to their side, to run a campaign on the lines of 'Hindenburg against the democratic State,' but it failed. Hindenburg refused to be a party to this, and he was finally rejected by the extreme Right when he put his signature, after Stresemann's death, to the Young Plan.

The Young Plan was, in itself, sound enough, but it was slightly reminiscent of the manner in which the Powers used to collect their debts from Turkey and Persia. This might not have mattered if the slump, and the fall in German exports had not caused a sudden increase in unemployment, and a demand from the bankers and the employers for State economies and lower wages. The unfortunate Müller was faced by the same problem as the Labour party in England,

Collapse of German Democracy

caught between the capitalists and the trade unions. He resigned, and Hindenburg called in Brüning as Chancellor. Brüning is a man for whom every democrat in the world should have the greatest sympathy and admiration. He had been a brave soldier in the war, and he possessed great moral courage. His failure illustrates only too clearly many of the weaknesses of democracy as a system.

Brüning, by training an economist, knew that his country must pass through a difficult time, and suffer much unemployment. He expected the slump to last about three years, but believed that he could put Germany's finances in order and avoid many of the worst features of the depression if he could take two necessary measures. The first was the division of the huge estates in East Prussia. Many of these were bankrupt, and had been subsidized by the Government during the inflation period, and afterwards. The second reform was to tax the industrialists, who had avoided their share ever since the war. Like Marx, Brüning was a Catholic and a man of the Centre, but he was at heart a great humanitarian and a firm believer in parliamentary institutions. He must have seen that it was a race against time if he was to push through his reforms, but he cannot have foreseen all the forces and factors which were going to destroy his work.

A slump will usually strengthen the political parties which have the support of the bankers and the industrialists. The banks can use their knowledge and power to force a crisis when it suits them. The middle classes, bewildered and frightened, tend to support the party of the rich. The trade unions are weakened by periods of unemployment, which exhaust their funds and damage the loyalty of their members. Brüning had to face the same kind of attack which broke the Labour Party in England, and brought Tardieu into power in France. In these two countries the bankers and industrialists worked through constitutional methods. In

Europe's Dance of Death

Germany the same classes, supported by the Junkers, distrusted a machine which they did not like and had not yet learnt to handle. They preferred to work by unparliamentary methods.

The industrialists and the Junkers were both in a bad way. The former had built up a number of very doubtful combines during the inflation period. They and the Junkers had strained their influence, inside and outside the Reichstag, to avoid taxation and to get State subsidies. The Junkers had even presented the President with a large estate at Neudeck, thereby making him see their point of view only too well. They were now determined to avoid the personal inconveniences of the slump, and this meant getting rid of Brüning, who was far too strict an economist and too humane a man to continue helping the rich at the expense of the poor. These were the reasons which persuaded the orthodox Right Wing, and the industrial 'People's Party' to throw in their lot with the tough and unscrupulous gang who had founded the Nazi movement. The movement needed money, and this was supplied. It seems to have come not only from the very rich in Germany, but even from the same classes in other countries.

The elections held in 1930 showed how effective was the National Socialist appeal. The Nazis now polled six and a half millions, about eight times their vote of two years before. Their propaganda and organization were being financed by industrialists like Thyssen, by Hugenberg and his shady friends and even sometimes by rich Jews. Hitler's parliamentary following rose from twelve to one hundred and eight, the largest single party and a formidable block of tough and irresponsible men to enter into an institution which they intended to destroy. Ranged beside the Nazis were the Nationalists, also bitter enemies of Weimar and determined to oust the Chancellor. Both parties poured out

Collapse of German Democracy

a mass of the vilest imaginable abuse against Brüning, who knew enough of his countrymen and their history to see that nothing could save Germany except some notable success which would tide him over the year or two before the slump receded. He had so little to work with. Behind him was the President, still his friend, but a very old man, difficult and unreliable. In the Reichstag he had to rely upon a group of parties, which gave him a majority but little of that aggressive support which he needed in the country. In Germany itself he could still count on the passive support of the great majority of the people, but he badly needed some success abroad, or some new development at home in order to get his Government and democracy through the dangerous interval.

A brave man fighting against adversity, Brüning went round Europe to get some real concession which he could put before his people, as a concrete gain to balance against the wild promises of Hitler. The Committee of Experts at Basle gave him an opportunity of putting a case for the end of reparations. The Disarmament Conference might produce a formula for the Allies' disarming or the partial rearmament of Germany. To-day those concessions seem so tiny, but in the lamentable autumn of 1931 and succeeding spring there was nothing to be got from France or England. Baldwin, Tardieu, and then worst of all the arid lawyer's brain of Sir John Simon at the Foreign Office. The Disarmament Conference met, and ended in fatuity. Reparations were finally scaled down at Lausanne, but not until Brüning had gone. No one in the Allied countries had the knowledge, imagination or will to make the kind of gesture which would have saved German democracy.

Brüning tried another venture at home. Hindenburg's seven-year term of office ended in 1932. As the Nationalists had foreseen it was going to be difficult to return to a

Europe's Dance of Death

succession of ordinary politicians as President. Hitler had declared his intention of standing, and might well succeed merely because he was not a Reichstag politician, and had had no responsibility during the worst of the economic crisis. Brüning's Cabinet were very loyal to him, but they agreed that the Chancellor, the 'Hunger Chancellor' as his enemies called him, might quite likely be defeated, and there was no other obvious choice. Brüning decided upon a daring scheme of persuading Hindenburg to offer himself for re-election, with the intention of his being succeeded by one of the sons of the Crown Prince, who would continue as a constitutional monarch on the British model.

It was a bold idea, which might very well have saved Europe. The first obstacle came from the Marshal himself. He was now almost senile. He harked back to his early days and his duty to the Emperor, from which he had never felt himself fully absolved. He was simply not interested in the idea of a Hohenzollern as a constitutional king, but he was prepared to stay on. His poor old brain was completely confused by the various intrigues which were going on around him, intrigues in which von Schleicher was acting as a dishonest broker, operating between the Wilhelmplatz, the Nationalists and the Nazis. In the end the election was held, Hitler objecting to the idea of a parliamentary election as being unconstitutional. There were four candidates—Hindenburg, Hitler, the Communist Thälmann, and a *Stahlhelm* nominee, Colonel Dösterberg.

It was a nightmare election. All those who had worked against Hindenburg in 1925 were now supporting him, while the Nationalists and the Nazis attacked their old hero with a quite incredible bitterness. The *Deutsche Zeitung* put the issue as being 'whether internationalist traitors and pacifist swine, with the approval of Hindenburg, are to bring about the final ruin of Germany.' Almost the whole of the Junkers

Collapse of German Democracy

and industrialists were behind Hitler. Hindenburg made one broadcast speech, but he left the campaign to Brüning, who managed it extremely well. In spite of all the publicity, the circus tricks of the Nazis, and the money poured out by the Nationalists, Hindenburg only just missed getting a clear majority, and the figures at the second ballot, after Düsterberg's withdrawal, were:

Hindenburg	..	..	19,359,642
Hitler	..	..	13,417,460
Thälmann	..	..	3,706,388

Brüning had taken a great risk and had won. In the year 1932 when the worst of the economic crisis was over the majority of the electorate had shown clearly that they wanted the Weimar constitution to continue. It looked as if the position might yet be saved.

Unfortunately the constitutionalist will always abide by the rules of the game. His opponents seldom show such compunction, especially in Germany. The Right, beaten at the polls, proceeded to undermine Brüning's position. In this work the lead was taken by von Schleicher who used the same kind of unscrupulous cunning with which he had rid himself of Seeckt and Gessler. He had the ear of the President, who was growing each day more confused and muddle-headed. Hindenburg was vaguely resentful about the Election. He, the Monarchist, had somehow got identified with Democracy. The intrigues, in which his son Oscar played a part, revolved round his muddled old head. He must have felt as if he was engaged in the Hunting of the Snark, when, it will be remembered, 'the bowsprit got mixed with the rudder sometimes.'

Schleicher, leisured and astute, had little difficulty in winning the old man over. Brüning was then busy with the preliminary negotiations which were to end at Lausanne,

Europe's Dance of Death

and he was on the verge of agreement with England, France and the United States on the question of armaments. Brüning could almost see the winning-post, but he had to return to Berlin only to find that his position had been hopelessly undermined. On May 8th Hindenburg dismissed Brüning, the very day that the American Minister in Berlin was reporting that Herriot, who had succeeded Tardieu, was now prepared to accept disarmament proposals on the lines Brüning had suggested. It was twenty-four hours too late.

His successor was a man sufficiently well known for his exploits in America—Franz von Papen—who with Captain Boy-Ed had been expelled from the States in 1916, when he was Military Attaché at Washington. This cheerful and utterly unscrupulous cavalry officer had won his way into the President's heart, and he proceeded to delight the old man by collecting a Cabinet of Hindenburg's friends. The so-called 'Cabinet of Barons' reaped some of the harvest which Brüning had sown and watched nearly to fruition. They had, of course, only a small following in the Reichstag, and new elections were held in July 1932. The country then showed how deep a cleavage the Nazis had made. The Communists increased their vote by two millions, and became the third largest party. The Nazis, without a very large vote increase, returned many more members, some two hundred and thirty in all. Papen's Nationalist party did very badly.

Hitler now considered that he should have the offer of the Chancellorship, although he was far from having a clear majority. He proposed joining with the Centre party. The usual Palace intrigues were set on foot through the inevitable Schleicher, but they had reckoned without the vagaries of the President. He liked Papen, and saw no reason to dismiss him merely because he had no support in the Reichstag. Summoning Hitler to see him, he offered him the very inferior position of Vice-Chancellor. Hitler attended at the

Collapse of German Democracy

Palace accompanied by his second-in-command, the notorious pervert Röhm. Hindenburg, taking this as an insult, offered neither of them chairs and lectured them on their duty to the State. It was now open war against the Government, while Hitler worked up street fighting against the Communists, and the usual terrorist activities. In this atmosphere the Reichstag met only to be dissolved at once, and the electorate were again asked to vote.

The November election showed a large decline in the Nazi vote, which fell from thirteen to eleven millions, and an increase in that of the Communists. Another deadlock. Again Hitler was offered the Vice-Chancellorship and retired in dudgeon to Munich, talking about 'heads will roll' and 'mowing down the marxists.' The party finances were in a bad way, as the industrialists had stopped subsidizing them since Brüning's dismissal.

By this time the intrigues round the President had become so complicated as to be ludicrous. Papen went, Schleicher took his place. This was the great mistake of his career, and cost him his life. He had played the part of Iago to perfection until, in a moment of weakness, he allowed himself to take the centre of the stage. Papen now became his avowed enemy, and began intriguing directly with Hitler, to whom he was able to bring back some of the industrialists' financial support. Schleicher made one last effort to split the Nazis by offering a post to Gregor Strasser, one of Hitler's lieutenants. Then he tried to organize a combination of the trade unions and the army. It was no good. He had lost his hold on the General Staff, and no one trusted him. The old Marshal dismissed him as he had done his predecessors, and began to bargain directly with Papen and Hitler. Schleicher retired from public life, but Hitler did not forget him. In the 'purge' of 1934 six youths were sent to murder him. This they did after first killing his wife. Strasser was executed at the same

Europe's Dance of Death

time together with so many who had helped Hitler to power.

Papen completed his negotiations quickly. He had learnt the perfect technique for handling the Marshal, who had almost relapsed into second childhood. Hitler was offered the Chancellorship, an Enabling Bill giving him almost dictatorial powers and the right to dissolve the Reichstag. Hindenburg entirely forgot the oath he had sworn, and the nineteen million Germans who had voted for him less than a year before. Somehow he had brought himself to believe that Hitler's triumph would herald a return to the old pre-war Germany. What was left of his mind probably spent most of the twenty-four hours in that delectable land. There is a story of his watching Hitler's triumphal procession, staged with the usual Fascist thoroughness. The Brown Shirts passed first, untidily dressed and marching badly. Behind them were the *Stahlhelm*, disciplined and precise. The Marshal murmured 'Ludendorff, how well your men are marching, and what a lot of prisoners they have taken!'

One of Hitler's terms was a new election, and again—for the fifth time in a year—the unfortunate voters were exposed to the propaganda machine of the Nazis. Even then it seemed unlikely that Hitler would get the clear majority he wanted in order to dissolve Parliament for ever. The voting was on March 5th. On February 27th the Reichstag was burnt down. It is now known that this was done by the inner circle of the Nazis, but it was ascribed to the Communists and added to the general violence and disorder. Numbers of Communists and others who were not Communists were arrested. Fighting and man-handling took place all over Germany. Yet in spite of this it must be recorded that the democratic tradition survived right to the end. The parties of the Left, except for the Communists, retained their vote. The Social Democrats only lost one seat.

Collapse of German Democracy

The Nazis did not get a clear majority, but with the help of the Nationalists they controlled three hundred and forty out of the six hundred and forty-seven seats. This was enough. Hitler let go his forces on the streets. Socialists, Jews, Communists, Pacifists, and even leading men of the Centre parties like Brüning and Löbe, the President of the Reichstag—all were fair game for the young men who instituted the Brown terror. Within a few days there was hardly a democratic leader or a trade union official who was not dead, in hiding, or in a concentration camp.

Hindenburg survived just long enough to get Hitler launched on his career with some slight semblance of legality. The Reichstag was called for its last meeting, held in the Kroll Opera House. Hitler introduced a Bill transferring all legislative authority to the Government, which was also empowered to change the constitution. To the honour of the Socialists it must be remembered that, in spite of the Storm Troopers massed outside, Otto Wels attended and made an uncompromising speech against the Bill. Brave words, and a courageous passive courage. Many Germans of the Left could summon these to the aid of democracy and freedom, but they are not enough against force and mob rule.

It is pathetic evidence of the strength of a legend that many millions in Germany believed that so long as Hindenburg remained there would be some check on the Nazi movement. To them he was still the legendary hero of Tannenberg, the man who kept faith. Actually the old man—he was now eighty-six—was little more than an automaton, just able to pull his great frame to attention on ceremonial occasions, living in complete seclusion at Neudeck, and knowing nothing of what was being done outside.

On August 2, 1934, the President died. He probably heard

Europe's Dance of Death

little about the purge which took place three months earlier. He was certainly not told of the murder of Schleicher, the wholesale shootings in Bavaria and Berlin, or even of the arrest of Papen. He was possibly informed about the shooting of Röhm, the homosexual, a man whom he had always detested, but without whom Hitler would never have reached power. Probably all that Hindenburg was allowed to know was that a conspiracy had been put down. The world learnt that the President had warmly congratulated Hitler—‘that you, by your determined action and your brave personal intervention, have nipped treason in the bud.’ The Marshal can have known even less about the murder of Dollfuss in July, and he died as a pious old man, supremely unconscious that he had ever failed in his duty. Freedom did not ‘shriek’ when Hindenburg died. Poor Freedom was already dead.

PART THREE

Italy Starts Aggression

In the last three chapters I have endeavoured to show why the comparatively hopeful and peaceful period at the end of the 'twenties did not lead to any permanent settlement of Europe. Three men, of whom two at least were full-blooded Conservatives, dominated the foreign policies of Europe—Stresemann, Austen Chamberlain and Briand. They believed that some kind of working agreement could be reached between the three countries, partly through the League of Nations and partly by direct contact. They failed for a number of reasons. None of the three had converted their own nominal supporters. The Nationalists, as we have seen, repudiated Stresemann. The British Conservatives never took the League of Nations seriously. Briand held his position because of his international reputation, not from his following in France. It frequently happens that statesmen, converted by their first-hand experience, will push through a policy which runs counter to all their early theories and the ideas of their party. To do this they must work quickly. Especially must they work quickly if they are, as these three men were, elderly and in poor health. (Stresemann died in 1929, Briand was a complete invalid by 1930, Austen Chamberlain refused office on account of age in 1931.)

Events, alas! moved with a maddening slowness. Stresemann, at least, knew that time was the essence of this contract. He could

Europe's Dance of Death

always hear

Time's winged Chariot hurrying near,

but the others believed that they had to educate their people as they went along. '*A Locarno*,' said Briand, '*nous avons parlé Européen. C'est une langue nouvelle qu'il faudra bien qu'il'on apprenne.*'¹ There was no time to wait while the unwilling scholars of the Right learnt this new language. The English Labour Minister, Arthur Henderson, who succeeded Austen Chamberlain, attempted to hurry up the process, but by the time he set to work Stresemann was dead, and the American slump had already begun to have its fatal reactions in Europe. Also the Labour party was only a minority Government doomed to early extinction.

The effects of the slump were to bring out the worst side of the propertied classes in England, France and Germany. In the first country they got matters so much their own way with an overwhelming majority in the Commons that there was no need for them to take extra-parliamentary action as the industrialists, bankers and landowners did in Germany and tried to do in France. In the general scramble there was no time for people to 'learn European.' Stresemann, Austen Chamberlain and Briand were replaced by Hitler, Sir John Simon and Pierre Laval. Europe was much the poorer by the exchange. Other Powers which had been comparatively quiescent now began to take a more active and combative part in European affairs. The new era of aggression was to begin, and the last part of this book will deal with the manner in which the challenge was met by the democracies, or the 'pluto-democracies' of England and France. It was a period of real wars, in which serious fighting took place; of 'white wars,' in which the weaker country capitulated under pressure; and of 'civil wars,' in which the aggressor

¹ 'At Locarno we spoke "European." It is a new language which we shall have to learn.'

Italy Starts Aggression

Powers took part. In all cases the aggressor Powers had already adopted a 'totalitarian' form of government.

The first shot in this series of wars was fired outside Europe. In September 1931, the Japanese, sensing the changed atmosphere in European politics, occupied Mukden. They thereby broke their word under the League Covenant, the Washington Nine Power Treaty and the Kellogg Pact. Their action provided a difficult test for the League. China was a member, but it was understood that her Government did not function very strongly in Manchuria, and the first instinct of France and England was to overlook this challenge to the European system at the opposite end of the earth.

Many English people believe that if England and America had taken a sufficiently firm line at this time many of our later troubles would have been avoided. Mukden was not quite the first example of the Fascist technique of aggression. Italy had attacked Corfu and sent an ultimatum to Greece in 1924, but this incident had been a failure from Mussolini's point of view, and he kept very quiet for several years. The Japanese challenge was on a more serious scale. When Mr. Stimson sent his identic note to China and Japan it was obviously meant as an invitation for direct combined action by the other Six Powers of the Washington Treaty.

There was just a chance that insistence on the sanctity of treaties might have ensured a decade of honourable peace, but neither England nor the other Powers were in the mind to act. Sir John Simon was at the British Foreign Office, a lamentable choice dictated solely by the need for pretending that the 1931 Government was 'National.' There is no one so reactionary as an elderly and disillusioned Liberal. Lord Morley became an extremely unsympathetic Indian Minister in his old age. Simon seems to have developed a special dislike for small countries. On this occasion he issued a

Europe's Dance of Death

communiqué which made no mention of treaties, and referred only to our trade interests, 'the principle of equal opportunity and the open door for the economic activities of all nations.' Later he was to constitute himself leading counsel for the defence, when Japan's action was arraigned at Geneva.

Probably the Foreign Office hoped that Mukden would be an isolated incident, like Corfu. It turned out to be the beginning of the Manchurian campaign which set a useful precedent to Italy and Germany. The chief features of this new epoch were the failure of the League of Nations, the collapse of international law, the doctrine that small States only exist on sufferance, and that the threat of war is a normal method of enforcing demands.

Few nations of any importance have a clean bill with regard to aggressive action against their weaker neighbours—certainly neither England nor France. The aggressions of Japan, Italy, Germany—and in 1939 we must add Russia—have been different in two respects. All these countries were bound by treaties, by their membership of the League, and by their signatures to the Kellogg Pact, to eschew war as an instrument of policy. All were pure autocracies in which there was no popular control, and no right of criticism within the country. All of them, including Russia after about 1938, had moulded their social and economic life so as to make efficiency in war the chief object of national endeavour. All claim that territorial expansion is essential to their existence, and therefore does not need any other justification.

In all, except possibly Russia, the children and the younger men and women have been taught to glorify war, not only as an instrument of policy, but as a thing admirable in itself. There is, of course, nothing new in this. When wars were fought with comparatively ineffective weapons and confined chiefly to professional armies and navies it

Italy Starts Aggression

was easy to imagine that an occasional blood-letting might be beneficial for a country. The militarist tradition was always strong in Japan, and developed rapidly in Germany after 1860. The works of Treitschke and Bernhardi had for four or five decades moulded opinion amongst army officers and university students. What was new in the totalitarian glorifying of war was that these theories became State dogmas, forced into the mind of every child with an efficient ruthlessness that no religious body has ever rivalled.

According to this Fascist philosophy, a State which is not decadent is either fighting or getting ready to fight, and periodic wars are essential for health. 'War,' says Mussolini, 'War is to man as maternity is to women. I do not believe in perpetual peace.' The same point is stressed in the Fascist Decalogue, published in February 1932. 'Know that the Fascist, especially the militiaman, must not believe in perpetual peace.' Hitler, of course, has always harped continually on the same theme, until the Catholic German youth prays at his first communion for the perfect death, with a French bullet through his heart, in the hour of his country's victory.

Most people in the democratic countries either did not know what was happening in Germany and Italy or did not take this kind of rhodomontade very seriously. They had seen the 1914 war in all its beastliness, and they knew that after such a war the victors are only a degree better off than the vanquished. Their general attitude was that which Thomas Paine had set out, with far less justification, over a century ago.

If there is a sin superior to every other, it is that of offensive war. Most other sins are circumscribed within narrow limits—that is, the power of one man cannot give them a very general extension, and many kinds of

Europe's Dance of Death

sins have only a mental existence from which no infection arises; but he who is the author of a war lets loose the whole contagion of hell and opens a vein that bleeds a nation to death.

The pacificism of England and France in the 'thirties was profound because it was founded on experience and commonsense. It was not a matter of party or of class, nor was it confined to the middle-aged. University students, reflecting the views of the teaching profession, were strongly anti-militarist. There is no better proof of the way in which the inhabitants of a Fascist State are circumscribed and cut off from mental intercourse with the rest of the world than the totally different philosophy of life which was being taught, during the 'thirties, on both sides of the North Sea and of the Alps.

Unfortunately this perfectly healthy and natural reaction against war was confused in England with two other factors, in France with one. The cult of complete pacificism, or refusing to fight in any cause at all, is extremely vocal in England, though it hardly exists in France. I have seen a good deal of this movement in England. The 'peace at any price' folk are strong inside the Labour party, and they were very active in connection with relief and refugee work in Spain, to which I have given up much of my time in the last three years. The core of the movement is religious. The Quakers abjure all violence, and they are a small but extremely influential and wealthy sect. Round them are clustered a collection of clergymen, politicians and others who are extremely vocal. For some of these I have the greatest admiration, but others struck me as fundamentally muddle-headed and egocentric. Many of them put their political case in a dishonest manner. The latter have done much harm, and they have undoubtedly helped the aggressor Powers.

Italy Starts Aggression

They and the Communists split the Left Wing movements in England, and enabled the extreme Right, who were all for letting Italy and Germany have their own way, point to the obvious divisions and confusion amongst the Opposition.

Some mention has already been made of the wealthy landlords and industrialists in England who have their counterpart in the Two Hundred Families and their supporters in France. Ever since 1931 this group has been active in condoning and justifying each successive act of aggression by Japan, then by Italy and finally by Germany. The leaders are so wealthy as to be quite international in outlook. Many of them belong to the old landowning families whose estates have developed industrially and thus enabled them to have a foot in each camp. Closely allied with them are retired army officers, colonial administrators and the like, who have developed a partiality for the rich, and a taste for the authoritarian methods. Behind these were the serried ranks of politicians 'on the make,' Sir Timothy Tadpole and Captain Taper, M.P., while they could always call on plenty of venal journalists and innumerable toadies of all sorts.

The extreme Right instinctively hates democracy, which is apt to develop a 'soak the rich' policy, but the hatred is more marked in France where they have not learnt to work the machine than in England where they have. Their sympathy with Fascism is based partly on its treatment of Trade Unions, and partly because Mussolini began, like Hitler, as an enemy of Russian Communism, though in neither case was the opposition so complete as was imagined by the richer classes in England and France. Hitler deceived his own German industrialists—men like Kirdorf, Hugenberg, Thyssen and Vogler. These men persuaded their fellow-industrialists in England and France that Nazism was a

Europe's Dance of Death

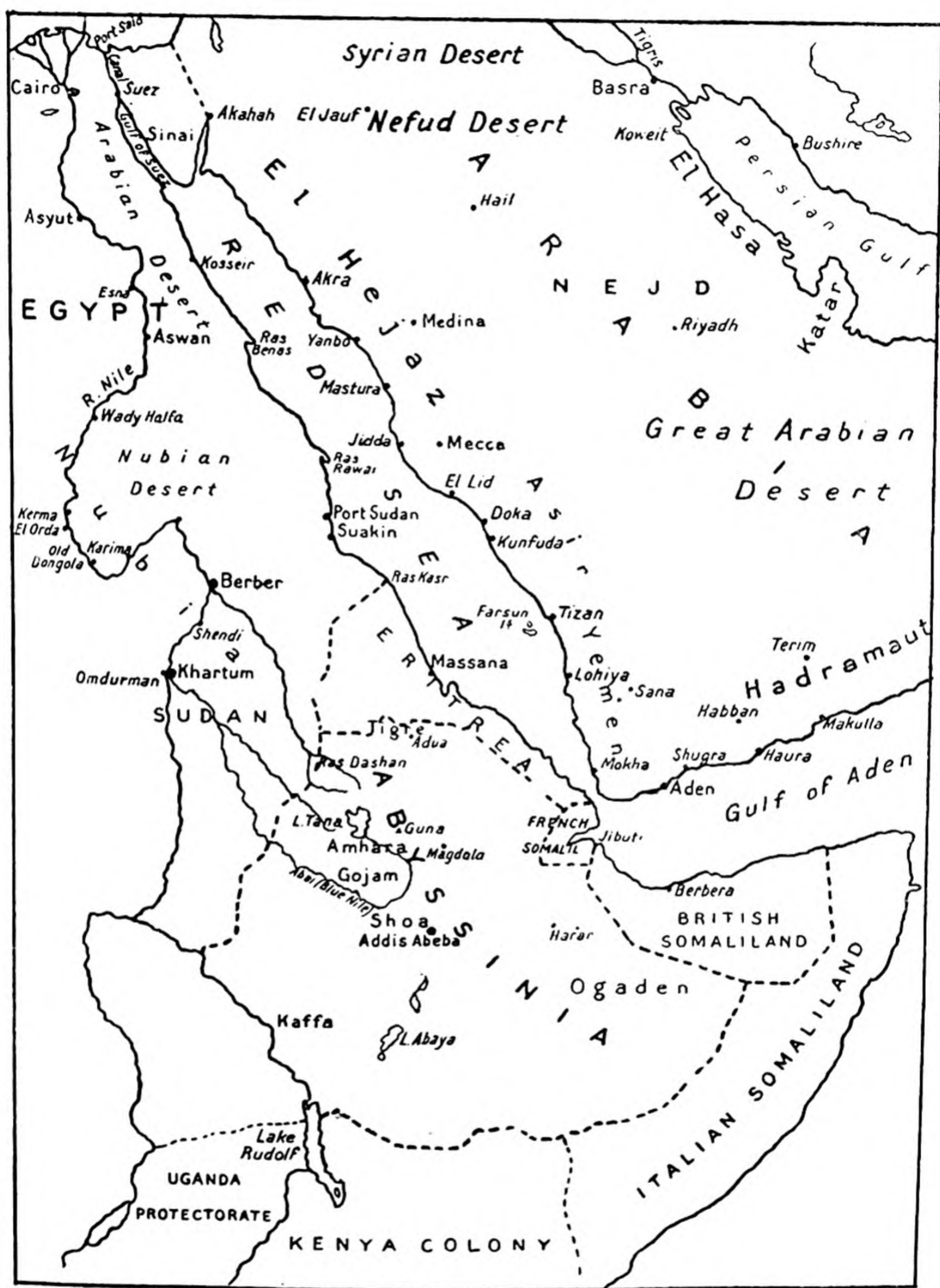
sound bulwark against Russia, and the idea spread rapidly in that small and mentally inbred society which is so influential in England.

Closely allied to the extreme Right groups in England and France are certain Catholic families, belonging to the old aristocratic land-owning class. In both countries these families have drifted into the Foreign Office—in England the tradition dates back to the days when they were still excluded from Parliament. These good people fully share the hatred of Communism which was almost an obsession with Pius XI. They have a great fondness for and many connections with Italy.

These extreme Right Wing groups are the very essence of the British and French pluto-democracies. Their influence with the Government varies, even when the Conservative party is in power. Thus for personal as well as political reasons they were far more important under Mr. Neville Chamberlain, who has queer social obsessions, than under Mr. Baldwin, who with all his failings had great natural dignity.

The knowledge that he could count on support in France and England undoubtedly encouraged Mussolini to start on his aggressive policy, but there were many other factors. The Corfu incident, in 1924, had been in the nature of an experiment. The Italians shelled that unfortunate town as a reprisal for the murder of General Tellini, and Mussolini sent an ultimatum to Greece, exactly in the manner to which we have now become so accustomed. In 1924 it was premature. The Allies passed the incident off as if it was a temporary aberration, and Mussolini saw that he must be stronger before he started any further ventures. For the next ten years Italian policy remained studiously correct, and Mussolini gained a neat diplomatic victory over France, in a little matter connected with Tangier. The Fascist leader

Italy Starts Aggression



N.E. AFRICA AND ABYSSINIA

Europe's Dance of Death

was, however, only waiting his time. From the first his propaganda had stressed the shabby treatment which Italy had received at Versailles. His colonial claims made a very popular appeal. Italy is one of the few European countries which can put forward a strong case for more 'living room.' Her land is largely unfertile, and she was very badly hit by the curtailment of her emigration to America which had taken most of her surplus population during the previous half century. Also the southern Italian really will go and colonize sub-tropical countries, like those in North Africa. He can stand greater heat and a far lower standard of living than the Englishman, Frenchman or German.

It must be admitted that Italy had a strong case against both England and France, especially the latter. It may be remembered that about the time of the Algeciras Conference England and France had agreed to give Italy a free hand in those parts of north-east Africa which they had not yet occupied. Italy had taken Tripoli in 1911, but did not attempt to advance into the Eritrea hinterland. At the beginning of the 1914 war her empire consisted only of huge desert areas, but in order to encourage her to come in on the side of the Allies she was offered certain compensations under the Treaty of London, April 26, 1915. As in the case of most war-time treaties for dividing up the pelt of the lion while he is still alive, the drafting was extremely vague, but the Italians could feel a real grievance when their colonial claims were disregarded at Versailles, especially as their part in the war had not brought them much glory.

Their quarrel was chiefly with France, a cousinly quarrel and therefore all the more bitter. The British Foreign Office was far more friendly. In 1925 an exchange of notes between Italy and England reaffirmed the 1906 agreement and recognized 'special interest' in Ethiopia—nothing very definite, just a staking out of claims in which England kept a modest

Italy Starts Aggression

lien on the waters of Lake Tsana. Sir Austen Chamberlain subsequently assured the Emperor of Ethiopia that these Notes did not affect the integrity of his country, but he and Italy knew better. In the same year England handed Jubaland over to Italy, a sufficient fulfilment of the 1915 London Treaty. The form of government—Fascist or Democratic—produced no difference in the Foreign Office attitude towards Italy. For various reasons the British ruling class has for centuries been far friendlier towards Italy than are the poorer classes.

The French, for one reason or another, insisted on bickering with their neighbour. They refused to make those minor 'rectifications' of frontier which would have ministered to Mussolini's self-esteem and would merely have transferred some thousand square miles of camel thorn. Then, in 1923, France proposed to introduce Ethiopia into the League of Nations, presumably in order to annoy Italy. Great Britain opposed the entry, foreseeing the difficulties which might arise under the 1906 Agreement. Unfortunately Italy, thinking that Ethiopia would be admitted anyhow, unwisely decided to support her claim.

Such was the diplomatic background to the Ethiopian affair. The Foreign Office files would have shown a perfectly consistent policy from 1906, indeed from 1884 onwards. Ethiopia was Italy's lawful preserve whenever she cared to take it. Up to about 1930 she showed no signs of wanting to do so.

At least three factors encouraged Mussolini to start upon his colonial ventures after so many years of quite unaggressive and correct behaviour with regard to foreign affairs. The first of these is difficult to mention without offending certain religious susceptibilities, but it is dishonest and absurd to disregard the part played by the Catholic Church, and especially by Pope Pius XI in the events immediately

Europe's Dance of Death

preceding the 1939 war. It took some years for Mussolini to come to terms with the Vatican, but the Lateran Treaty of 1929 was a triumph for his diplomacy. He started with the great advantage that the Pope was a loyal Italian, had acquired a great hatred of Communism, and believed that the authoritarian State was the best bulwark against this insidious growth. The Treaty included the handing over to the Vatican of a thousand million lire in Italian bonds, which the Pope agreed not to sell for a long period of years. A number of outstanding claims and questions were thereby settled. The Pope was delighted to find himself at peace with his beloved country, and financially freer from the dwindling support coming in from other countries. He did not understand the extent to which he was identifying himself with the Fascist regime, nor at that time was the regime unpopular abroad except amongst certain Left Wing parties. These he did not worry about. They were usually not Catholic, and their views—Liberal or Socialist—he would have considered subversive.

The Concordat immensely strengthened Mussolini's position. The Vatican was a great diplomatic force in central Europe, until the Anschluss and the destruction of Poland destroyed the two most Catholic countries. Still more important was the renewed hold which Mussolini was able to establish over the hundreds of thousands of expatriated Italians living in French and British territory throughout North Africa and the Near East. The Italian colony in Tunis or Egypt would be a 100 per cent Catholic, and its children all went to Catholic schools, but they were by no means so solidly Fascist. These colonies were now transformed into those 'minorities' which play such an important part in the technique of Fascist aggression.

Apart from the Concordat Mussolini had not consolidated his hold over Italy as much as he had hoped. After ten years

Italy Starts Aggression

he still sat a little uneasy in his throne. Possibly readers will have tired of hearing about the effect of the 1929 slump on Europe, but Italy was undoubtedly a sufferer. Her foreign trade was falling off rapidly, and her financial position was worsened by the fixing of the lira at an artificially high price. Then the army had been carrying on a lengthy and tiresome war in Tripoli, and altogether the Government's stock was not standing very high in 1932.

In such circumstances a dictator will always wonder whether it would not be better to divert public interest by undertaking some foreign venture. He had talked so long about the glories of war without doing any fighting that Mussolini may have thought the time had come for an experiment—preferably against a third-rate opponent. We do not know how far the rapid rise of Hitler encouraged Mussolini to get busy in North Africa. The relations between the two dictators can only be guessed at, and such imponderables are best left out of consideration.

Once Mussolini had decided to go in search of an Empire the first victim was bound to be Ethiopia. The diplomatic preliminaries had already been completed. Only France and England were directly concerned, and the agreement with the British Foreign Office was all arranged. It is probable that no official in the foreign departments of any of the three countries ascribed the least importance or relevance to Ethiopia's membership of the League. I have been assured that there was no mention of it in the files of the British Ministry at Addis Ababa.

Mussolini is supposed to have considered, as an alternative, the taking of Portuguese East Africa, presumably by a mixture of bargaining and threats. This idea was abandoned because of opposition from South Africa. There was another reason why Ethiopia should be preferred. The Italians tend to suffer from that distressing complaint, a

Europe's Dance of Death

feeling of inferiority. One of Mussolini's complaints against France is that she will treat Italy as a second-class Power. Also, tucked away somewhere in the back of most Italian's minds were some vague unhappy memories of battles in which their troops did not show to any advantage. Two such names were Adowa and Caporetto.

Adowa lies quite close to the Eritrean border. The military parade into Ethiopia, which Mussolini thought would be sufficient, would take the road near the site of that sad battle in which General Baratieri threw away an army in a moment of pique. It would be easy to stage a battle on the same field, and Adowa would be 'avenged' by tanks, aeroplanes and machine guns against an enemy who had none of these things. The methods of the political psycho-analyst are pretty crude, but then he has to work in the mass.

In 1932 General de Bono was sent to Eritrea to prepare for a campaign which would begin in two or three years' time.

I have often wondered whether Mussolini really placed a high value on Ethiopia as a colony, or whether he was chiefly attracted by its size and its strategic importance if he should ever fall out with the Entente Powers. When I was in Abyssinia as a correspondent I was shown a map taken from a dead Italian soldier. It was a pictorial map, and showed all the marvels of the country—gold mines here, banana plantations there, a land veritably flowing over with milk and honey. It is possible that Mussolini allowed himself to be deceived by the agents or 'consuls,' some seventy in number, whom he forced on to the Ethiopian Government during the 'twenties. These men spent their time intriguing amongst any dissident chiefs, and spying out the land. Probably they reported far too favourably on that queer country, intersected by huge ravines, surrounded by hundreds of miles of scrub desert and swamp, and chiefly valu-

Italy Starts Aggression

able for some fertile table-lands at heights too great for Europeans to live in comfort. The Achilles heel of every dictator is that once he is well established he will never be told unpleasant truths.

Once Mussolini had settled upon his victim the working up of a case against Ethiopia followed the procedure we all know so well—frontier troubles, carefully engineered frontier ‘incidents,’ accusations of ill-treatment of ‘nationals’ (these had to be the unwanted consuls, there were hardly any other Italians) and attacks upon the Government as being unable to keep order, or, in this case, to check slavery. Aesop first described the technique in his fable of the wolf and the lamb, but I have always regretted that Aesop chose the lamb for the second animal. The world is inclined to expect too high a standard of innocence and rectitude on the part of the injured party, and to be disillusioned when that standard is not reached. Nothing would be easier than to make out a critical case against the Governments of Austria, Czecho-Slovakia, Poland, Albania and Finland, though they may have been far better and more enlightened than those of the countries which have engulfed them. Ethiopia was undoubtedly a backward country. My own first-hand knowledge of the land was limited to a short period of the war, but I have met most of the very few Europeans and Americans whose experience justified their holding definite views. Many of them were missionaries from two very free countries—Sweden and New Zealand. Amongst the Americans I should like to mention Mr. Colson, the financial adviser to the Emperor, a man of the very highest integrity who died of a strained and partly, I fear, of a broken heart at the end of the war.

With hardly an exception these men and women liked and admired the Ethiopians. They would criticize the Government on certain points, but they all agreed that the Emperor

Europe's Dance of Death

was doing a great constructive work, and only needed time to give his country a sound administration. The old feudal chiefs or Rases were, as in so many countries, the chief obstacle, but the Emperor was educating their sons, and very gradually introducing new ideas from abroad. Slavery existed, but it was little more than unpaid work by feudal retainers, and the chiefs were usually only too delighted to get rid of these men, as was discovered when the Emperor as Regent passed his anti-slavery decrees. The slave trade was entirely different. The capture of central African slaves and the shipping of them across the Red Sea is an old and dishonourable business which was dying out. The modern Sheik does not want slaves to run by his horse: he prefers a car. In the suppression of this trade Ethiopia was no more remiss than Italy, for this traffic, as can be seen from a map, was only possible by the connivance or dereliction of Italian officials in Eritrea.

Abyssinia was not the least lamb-like, but it was one of the many countries which I deeply regret I shall never see again. Recently I went to Stockholm and visited one of the Swedish missionaries whom the Italians had expelled. He had his family with him, and lived in an attractive house looking over the water. However, when I congratulated him on its situation, he suddenly said that it was no good, he could not sleep at night, he was longing all the time to get back to Abyssinia. I could understand him perfectly.

This, however, is by way of a digression. Except to a few enthusiasts the fate of this little race of Coptic Christians is of no more than academic interest, though I have personally the feeling that they will not always remain inside the Italian Empire. The 'Abyssinian affair' was a test for the new European system, and for the purposes of this book Geneva looms larger than Addis Ababa or Harar.

By the end of 1934 Mussolini's local preparations, in

Italy Starts Aggression

Eritrea and Italian Somaliland, had reached a stage which would enable him to attack within a year. He had, he presumed, English agreement. The officials in the Sudan knew all about his activities. They had even prepared a confidential report as to the effect of the change upon the British possessions in north-east Africa. This was the so-called 'Maffey Report' which in 1936 was 'stolen' and published in the Italian Press. France's attitude was less defined, but Laval was at the Quai d'Orsay. Mussolini met the astute little Auvergnat in January, and they came to an agreement about a number of points, including Tunis. The agreement was, on the whole, so favourable to France that we may presume that one of its unwritten features was a free hand in north-east Africa. It is almost certain that Mussolini, again misled by his consuls, believed that directly he marched into Ethiopia he would be joined by a number of dissident Rases, including a pretender to the throne, and would be able to continue as merely an intervener in a civil war. He presumably explained this to the British and French Foreign Offices, and they accepted this too optimistic forecast.

The best laid plans often 'gang a-gley.' The diplomats had forgotten a few factors. The Emperor of Ethiopia was an extremely intelligent man, with a competent staff of advisers, American and European. He put his case skilfully and with moderation both before the League of Nations and before such public opinion as still existed in Europe. He found many sympathizers amongst the smaller democracies and their Governments. There was also considerable unofficial support for him in England, even amongst the Conservatives. The British have not been well informed about European affairs since 1914, and they did not understand that the larger Powers were all rapidly relapsing into the *Macht-politik* of pre-1914 days. Mr. Baldwin had simply forgotten to explain this to his people. He now found himself, with a

Europe's Dance of Death

General Election approaching, committed to a policy which would be very hard to reconcile with his usual line of talk about the League of Nations.

The situation was made more difficult for Baldwin's Government by the activities of an organization called the League of Nations Union. This was not just a Left Wing body. Sir Austen Chamberlain was a Vice-President, and its moving spirit was Lord Robert Cecil, a leading Conservative and a son of Lord Salisbury, the Victorian Prime Minister. During 1934-35 they ran a ballot, or 'straw vote,' on such points as supporting the League, disarmament by agreement, prevention of private profit in armament-making, etc. The result of a ten million vote was extremely embarrassing to a Government which had agreed to allow one Member of the League to absorb another, which was not worried about Italian armaments, but was seriously disturbed over the growing strength and truculence of Germany. The facts about German re-armament had been kept from the British public. Shortly before he retired to the House of Lords, Baldwin explained what he had done, and why he did it. His speech was such an unconscious revelation of the 'pluto-democratic' way of running the country that it is worth giving a long quotation.

I put before the whole House my own views with an appalling frankness. From 1933 I and my friends were all very worried about what was happening in Europe. You will remember at that time the Disarmament Conference was sitting at Geneva, and there was probably a stronger pacifist feeling running through the country than at any time since 1933. You will remember the election at Fulham . . . when a seat was lost by about seven thousand votes on no issue but the pacifist, and that the National Government candidate, who made the most guarded reference

Italy Starts Aggression

to the question of defence was mobbed for it. That was the feeling in the country in 1933.

My position as the leader of a great party was not altogether a comfortable one. I asked myself what chance was there within the next year or two of that feeling being so changed that the country would give a mandate for re-armament. Supposing that I had gone to the country and said that Germany is re-arming and that we must re-arm—does anybody think that the pacific democracy would have rallied to that cry at that moment? *I cannot think of anything that would have made the loss of the election from my point of view more certain.*¹

This extraordinary statement was received with "cheers and laughter." The assumption was that 'I and my friends,' the little group of very wealthy men who control our plutocracy, were justified in withholding information and adopting a false policy, that of not re-arming, because otherwise their party might be defeated at the polls. Baldwin's astounding statement, which is not even factually correct, may be considered in future years as marking the complete collapse of real democratic government.

Returning to the previous year, 1935, we must consider what 'I and my friends' did when faced by a crisis more immediate than that of 1933. The German re-armament was a comparatively slow affair, the Prime Minister, ever an opportunist, might hope that time would solve that difficulty, or that there would be an opportunity later of catching up. The Ethiopian business was urgent. The Foreign Office had its policy, and so had that collection of English mugwumps led by Lord Robert Cecil. Mr. Baldwin's subtle but procrastinating mind found the perfect solution. Why should not both policies be run together? Time, propa-

¹ House of Commons Debates, November 12, 1936.

Europe's Dance of Death

ganda and an Ethiopian collapse could be trusted to cover up any divergences which might appear later, or at any rate could conceal them until after the General Election. This was accordingly arranged. Sir Samuel Hoare, who succeeded Sir John Simon at the Foreign Office, was entrusted with the Foreign Office policy. Mr. Eden was given a roving commission to deal with League of Nations affairs, and keep the mugwumps happy until the autumn election. It was a charming case of dual personality on the Jekyll and Hyde model, though it was bad luck upon the prim Sir Samuel Hoare to be cast for the latter part. The British genius for compromise can seldom have achieved a more consummate piece of double-dealing.

Things began to go wrong from the first. Mr. Eden overdid his part of 'the young man so terribly in earnest about peace.' The second and third class Powers hastened to condemn Italy. (It is sad to think that one of the few which did not was Albania. Gratitude is not a virtue often found amongst dictators.) At first this unanimity helped Mussolini. He was able to pose before his own people as *Athanasius contra mundum*, an attitude rousing a lot of enthusiasm amongst those Italians of the North who had no wish either to fight in or to colonize Abyssinia.

Mussolini himself was a difficult partner in this rather subtle deal. All through the summer Hoare and Laval played their parts. While the Italians massed armaments and supplies in Eritrea and Somaliland the English and French saw to it that the Abyssinians got as little as possible of either. A glance at the map shows that Ethiopia was entirely cut off from the outside by Italian, British and French colonies. Her one railway ran to French Djibuti, her roads run through Harar to British Somaliland, or south to Kenya. Her best communications are by water transport, down the River Sobat to the Nile and through the Sudan. Not only

Italy Starts Aggression

did the British and French Governments put an embargo on arms to both countries—Italy not needing them—but they put every obstacle in the way of the Emperor getting any rifles or machine guns through to Ethiopia. This restriction continued after the war had started, and when full sanctions were supposed to be operating against Italy. The French would not even let a revolver through Djibuti, and the British held up a consignment of rifles in Berbera. I have bitter memories of this, because I counted as my friend an Ethiopian of German origin, Mr. David Hall, who was trying to get these arms through to Addis Ababa.

This was not enough for Mussolini, who was horrified when he found that his cautious invasion of Ethiopia, in September 1935, merely unified the country against him. The only dissident Ras who came over was the Emperor's son-in-law, Ras Gugsa, whose father-in-law had quarrelled with him on account of his bad treatment of the daughter. Mussolini had no desire to undertake a *Blitzkrieg*, though it has now been shown that under modern conditions a fully equipped army with aeroplanes, tanks, mechanical transport, etc., would be able to dispose of a half-armed force without any serious trouble. The Italian troops had little stomach for any except the mechanical part of the war, and Mussolini put out a call to France and England to get him out of his difficulties. This was the origin of the Hoare-Laval Peace Terms.

Mussolini's call for help was extremely upsetting, and it was necessary to rush through a General Election with almost indecent haste. In this, at least, the Baldwin policy was successful. I was myself a candidate in a mixed industrial and country constituency. Although my interest in the Abyssinian question led me to suspect what was being arranged, there was yet no mention of Peace terms, and the Conservatives who supported the League of Nations were

Europe's Dance of Death

pleased with Eden's activities, the imposition of sanctions, and especially a remarkably dishonest speech made by Sir Samuel Hoare. They all voted solidly for my opponent, a business-man and a Catholic, who until actually at the election time had been opposed to sanctions. In this way was elected the House of Commons which was to support first Baldwin, and then Neville Chamberlain, in a series of manœuvres which ended in the sacrifice of three countries, and the war of 1939. The Members are now there for the duration of the war. As soon as they were safely back the Hoare-Laval peace terms were published.

In order to estimate the speed and magnitude of Europe's plunge into barbarity it is worth recalling the public reaction to certain events. Thus we may remember that in 1912 a Prussian officer 'beat up' a cobbler. The Zabern incident was reported in every newspaper all over Europe, and nearly brought down the Government. To-day we hardly notice a decree which condemns thousands of German Jews to the tortures of a concentration camp, or hundreds of Czech students to be shot. Even in 1935 there was quite a healthy English reaction against the diplomatic proposals to divide up a backward and 'black' Empire. It was the British growl, loud but inarticulate—'You can't do that there here.' It was not heard again until the summer of 1939 when the provocation was far greater. In each case the pluto-democracy gave in. Sir Samuel Hoare resigned—with dignity and in the certain hopes of a glorious resurrection—and the Peace Plan was incontinently dropped. Four years later a most unwilling Neville Chamberlain, preparing to stage another Munich, gave way and declared war on Germany.

There has been a tendency to treat Mr. Eden, who succeeded Sir Samuel Hoare, as if he were an innocent young man who did not share the Foreign Office views. This is absurd. Not only must Mr. Eden have been fully aware that

Italy Starts Aggression

England was carrying on simultaneously two incompatible policies, but he continued to follow out the double policy himself. It is true that sanctions remained, at least in theory, but there was only one sanction which could have hindered Italy, only one concession which could have helped Ethiopia. The two-fold Italian advance, from Eritrea and Somaliland, depended entirely on mechanical transport. An oil sanction, seriously applied, would have held up Italy, and might have made her reorganize her campaign. Ethiopia could call upon some of the bravest and hardiest men in the world, but they could not fight with their bare hands. They wanted arms, and both France and England tightened up their embargo after the failure of the Hoare-Laval plan. It is not pleasant to be ashamed of one's own country, and there is one sight I wish I could forget, but never shall—the feudal levies moving off to battle armed with old muzzle-loading guns and spears.

England and France did everything they could to hasten the end of a war which was as embarrassing to them as it was annoying for Mussolini. Lord Halifax, who is often put forward as the ideal English statesman, *le preux chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*, was the instrument of an extraordinary policy of duplicity in an attempt to make things easier for the Italians. At the end of March, three months after the Italians had begun the systematic use of poison gas, Lord Halifax denied that he had any information and added that it would be wrong 'to pre-judge a matter so grave and so vitally affecting the honour of a great country.' At that time the Foreign Office had the report of its own representative in Addis Ababa, the analysis of a bomb sent by its military attaché, and a number of independent reports, including one from Mr. Lambie, the American head of the Red Cross in Ethiopia. Britain was more interested in exculpating the Italians than was Mussolini in concealing the methods

Europe's Dance of Death

used by his troops. Some two hundred and fifty tons of poison gas was sent by freight steamer through the Suez Canal and declared. This also was known to Lord Halifax. Such is the tangled web into which a crooked policy may lead a sincerely religious man.

The last phases of the war are sufficiently well known to all. No Englishman who was in the country during the war can think of the mass executions without bitterness. After the fall of Addis Ababa the Italians, who like killing even if they do not like torturing, shot down everyone in the country who knew any foreign languages. Later the garrison panicked and slaughtered most of the remaining inhabitants of the ill-fated little capital, perched up on its ten thousand-foot plateau. Since then Abyssinia has been a country cut off from the world. Fascist ruthlessness, combined with the general disturbance of Europe, has made it easy for Mussolini to draw a thick curtain round the land. In this he has had the cordial co-operation of British officials in Somaliland, Kenya and the Sudan.

The corpse of Abyssinia remained to poison the life of Europe. Not even the slump had such a far-reaching and disastrous influence. Mussolini could point to a victory—extolled at far above its value by the neo-Fascists in England, Mr. Garvin in the *Observer*, Lord Rothermere in the *Daily Mail*—but it had cost him far more than he had expected, and he must have soon learnt that it had been a bad investment. He had used the Ethiopian venture to distract attention from conditions in Italy, he now had to try another foreign enterprise to distract attention from the barrenness of his new African Empire. Both he and Hitler had been carrying on intrigues in Spain since 1934. He could trust on England's assistance. On June 5th Sir Samuel Hoare was received back into the Cabinet. Four days later Mr. Neville Chamberlain made a calculated indiscretion

Italy Starts Aggression

when he talked about the 'midsummer madness' of sanctions. The Right Wing was obviously returning to power, and able to force Mr. Baldwin's hand. A month later Italian aeroplanes flew to Morocco, and General Franco began his rebellion, backed by Italian and German money, arms and men.

Each unhappy phase of the Abyssinian affair acted as a direct incentive. Dictators are a competitive race, even when they are nominally in alliance. Mussolini had blazed the trail for further aggression by proving the weakness of the Anglo-French entente, and the resulting futility of the League of Nations. Hitler started slowly, but his resources were far greater. He had behind him nearly twice as many men as Italy could produce, he had far larger industrial and engineering resources, and there was in Germany more fighting spirit, especially amongst the masses. Germany was like a tiger following in the footsteps of a hyena, which has scented the prey, but would be content with some quite modest capture.

Hitler took each successive step with a careful regard to France and England. He knew that he had well-wishers in both countries, in France amongst the Fascists and the Two Hundred Families, in England amongst circles very near the Cabinet. These had approved Mussolini's attack on Abyssinia because it seemed a return to normalcy, a white race walloping a black one, and because it struck a blow at the League of Nations. They also felt that Hitler, like Mussolini, was a supporter of the Right, a defender of capitalism against Communism, and a man who knew how to put Trade Unions and the Left into their proper place. The English neo-Fascists, who had kept well clear of Germany, when it had been democratic, weak, unaggressive and Christian, now began to visit and to find every virtue in the new Germany, totalitarian, anti-semitic, militarist and pagan.

Europe's Dance of Death

Göring proved an admirable host, and Ribbentrop a charming guest.

Hitler's first overt act was to re-arm. Early in 1935 he restored conscription, and increased the *Reichswehr* to 550,000 men, thus committing two breaches of the Treaty of Versailles. It put the three Powers, France, England and Italy into a difficult position, because the Treaty had contained clauses foreshadowing general disarmament, and Italy had just boasted her ability to put a million men in the field. The three Powers met at Stresa, where the subject of Abyssinia was kept off the agenda, though everyone knew that Mussolini meant to launch his attack in the autumn. A grouping of Powers was suggested, the so-called Stresa front, but it was a gimcrack affair, which England broke entirely by making, a few months later, a naval treaty with Germany. This safeguarded British interests, but showed a complete indifference to those of France.

The next important German move was in March of the following year. The Abyssinian war was drawing to its close, and Mr. Eden finally agreed to the indefinite postponement of the sanctions on oil. It was the last scene in the tragi-comedy, and marked the end of the League as a serious body capable of effective action against an aggressor. Four days later Hitler pointed the moral. He denounced the Locarno Pact, and began the military occupation of the Rhineland. It was a subtly timed act. The British people were bewildered and disillusioned. The French Government clamoured for immediate action against Germany, and called upon the other Locarno signatories, Belgium, England and Italy, to support her. Italy obviously would do nothing of the sort, and the British Government decided that it could not persuade its people that Germans marching peacefully into their own land was such a bad thing, compared with Italy walking into Ethiopia.

Italy Starts Aggression

The Times, which under the Astor regime represents the extreme 'drawing-room Fascist' group, told the world that Hitler was presenting a wonderful opportunity for rebuilding Europe. Nothing was done, and four months later Hitler and Mussolini were instigating a civil war in Spain, and intervening in it. By the summer of 1936 the group friendly to the dictators was dominating the British Cabinet—Mr. Neville Chamberlain, Sir Samuel Hoare, Sir John Simon, with their powerful extra-Parliamentary support amongst the very rich. England was never more of a pluto-democracy than in the three years immediately preceding the 1939 war. This was to be very clearly shown in the Spanish affair. The world had become too complicated, the issues too confused for the average Englishman. He was inclined to let the Government 'get on with the job.'

While England moved politically to the Right, France went all the other way. She had her elections towards the end of the Abyssinian war, in April 1936, and the real struggle was between a united Left Wing group, the Popular Front, and the depleted 'National' Government, with its strong Fascist predilections, its connection with the 'Two Hundred Families,' and the *marchands des canons*. The Popular Front won handsomely, and Léon Blum became Premier. He had, however, a strong Communist section—seventy-two members—in the mixed group of which he was the head. *Le grand vaincu* of the election was the Fascist, Colonel de la Rocque.

Blum's avowed intention was to reverse the Laval policy, but it was obviously too late to do anything about Abyssinia, and the French followed the English lead in abandoning sanctions. For some time the Popular Front did not take any definite line about foreign affairs. The Government was too busily engaged in its commitments for domestic legislation, and in dealing with a series of strikes intended to

Europe's Dance of Death

hasten on the reforms. It was, however, obvious from the first that this extremely advanced French Government would not work in with the extremely Conservative British Cabinet. The first difficulties which arose over Spain will be considered in the next chapter.

The smaller nations in Europe saw with the greatest alarm the rise of the two Fascist Powers, and the weakness and divided principles of England and France. Naturally the democracies had pinned their faith on the system of collective security, and its utter collapse on the first trial left them anxious and angry. To some extent the common danger drew them together, but in view of the feebleness of the democratic Powers some of the smaller States thought it advisable to 'hedge,' especially after the formation of the Anti-Comintern Rome-Berlin Axis. The reactions in the Balkans and in the Danubian basin are too complicated to describe here. Hungary was drawn definitely into the Axis. The Little Entente—Czecho-Slovakia, Yugo-Slavia and Rumania—waited for the inevitable coming of the Austrian Anschluss, knowing that they could not fight alone, but prepared to follow an Anglo-French lead. In May 1936, a semi-official paper in Prague wrote prophetically enough:

It is always useful to speak clearly. Should Italy, France and England inactively watch the execution of Anschluss, the Little Entente Powers could not risk their countries in a bloody and unequal fight with Germany. If the Western Great Powers, however, decided to oppose Anschluss definitely by every means, the Little Entente will be no less decided.'

The Anschluss was to come later, after Germany had been able to tie Italy up in Spain, and gauge the utter ineffectiveness of Anglo-French co-operation. The attitude of the Little Entente was typical of what was happening over

Italy Starts Aggression

Europe—in the Balkans, amongst the Baltic States, in Scandinavia. Little countries with weak armaments cannot unite into a powerful force, but they can join and give material assistance to a Great Power which gives them a lead. No such lead was forthcoming, and Europe was rapidly sinking into that stage which Thomas Hardy described in *The Dynasts*:

*Nought remains
But vindictiveness here amid the strong,
And there amid the weak an impotent rage.*

One powerful organization in Europe approved of what was happening, and was to approve still more over the rising in Spain. On May 12, 1936, almost the same day that the Italians turned their machine guns on to rows of roped interpreters, servants, officials and others at Addis Ababa, Pope Pius XI opened an exhibition of the Catholic Press. He rejoiced, he said, that the exhibition 'coincided with the triumphal happiness of a great and good people in a peace which it hopes and confidently expects will be a prelude to the new European and world peace of which the exhibition seeks to be and is a clear symbol.'

Germany Follows Suit

The Spanish affair is probably the most instructive of all the untoward events which led up to the 1939 war. As a symptom of Europe's sickness it gives the best clue to a proper diagnosis. Just because it exposed so crudely the vices and weaknesses of many leading politicians they have been at pains to prevent any examination by such independent-minded persons as may still exist. The whole subject has been deliberately muddied over by tendentious statements, and by inaccurate propaganda, religious as well as political. I do not know whether this flood of misrepresentation reached other countries in such force as it did England. From what I saw of journalists and writers in eastern Spain during the war I got the impression that the people of Scandinavia and the United States were far better served than most of the world.

To some extent my position is easier than when I first attempted to write about Spain a year or so ago. Since then both the Italian and German Governments have published fully documented accounts of their activities in Spain, activities which they and the British Government had previously denied. It is, however, still difficult to write without drawing upon one's own experience, and it will be advisable for me to state what that experience was. My previous knowledge of the country was limited. I had visited Morocco several times, and knew the small Spanish zone, but I had done little more than travel through the mainland.

Germany Follows Suit

Some five months after the rebellion began I went out to the Government side of Spain in charge of some transport for the evacuation of children from Madrid, and with the object of extending into other kinds of relief work. I spent much of 1937 and 1938 in eastern Spain on behalf of the National Joint Committee which had undertaken this task, and which was later responsible for bringing some four thousand Basque children to England.

The Government allowed our lorries to move very freely about their half of the country. This enabled me to draw upon the pooled experience of our English drivers and helpers. Also I was brought into contact with the other men and women who were doing similar work—American, Canadian, Swiss, Swedish, French, etc. A considerable proportion of these belonged either to the Society of Friends or to an extremely pacifist organization with its headquarters in Switzerland. They took a more objective and less political view of the war than I could hope to achieve. Some of them had been in Spain from before the beginning of the rebellion. They enabled me to revise my own ideas in the light of their experience and to fill up the gaps in my first-hand observation.

In 1930 Primo de Rivera's seven-year dictatorship had come to an end. Though his rule had been comparatively mild, he left Spain hopelessly ill-prepared to govern itself. When people talk cheerfully about the settlement of Europe after the disappearance of Mussolini and Hitler they usually forget the consequences of autocratic rule. One is the disappearance from public life of all independent political leaders. Some are dead, others have been in exile or in prison. The latter do not return easily to normal politics. No other younger men have been trained to take their place, nor acquired that popular following which is needed for stable government.

Europe's Dance of Death

Another result of a long dictatorship is almost inevitable. Such political life as has continued underground tends to be very advanced, very theoretical, completely out of touch with the mass of the people. There is a multiplicity of little parties, each believing itself the rightful heir of the revolution which has brought down the autocrat. Spain has had a succession of military dictators, interspersed with periods of constitutional rule in which these after-effects have always been apparent. The vicious circle begins again by another revolution from the army and from those reactionary forces which the Spanish sometimes call 'the traditional obstacles'—the landowners, the Church, and the officials. It would not be unfair to say that Spain has, for decades, been divided into two main camps—those who like being ruled by military dictators, men such as Espartero, O'Donnell, Serrano, and Prim, and on the other side, those who want to have a voice in their own Government. During the present century the first group have been joined by many industrialists, and also by young men of the type who sympathize with Fascism in France. The latter are mostly organized in the Phalangista, an organization which has taken Nazism as its model, or else in the Requetés, a more Catholic body on Italian Fascist lines. The Church can also claim the support of the peasants in Navarre and the backward parts of Andalusia.

The opposition to these privileged bodies was powerful in numbers, but displayed, in 1931, the usual weaknesses. It lacked responsible leaders, and so far as it was organized politically it was split into little groups, many of them more advanced in theory than in practice. The autonomous movements in Catalonia and the Basque country added to the general confusion. Certain elements might be described as revolutionary, as is inevitable after a long period of repression. The most important were the syndicalists, struggling for workers' control in the factories; and the anarchists, a

Germany Follows Suit

peculiarly Spanish party. A third revolutionary group, the Communists, were by far the smallest. They hardly numbered twenty thousand, and were hopelessly split into the supporters of Trotski and those of Stalin. The anarchists were strong in the villages, and their creed—which closely resembles that put forward by Mr. Gandhi in India—is the exact opposite of Nazism and Communism. It demands as little as possible interference from the central Government. The unit is the village with its *alcalde*, traditionally very independent of the Government, and his *junto* of advisers. Those who know India will notice how the Spanish village authorities correspond to the *patel* and his *panchaiyet*. I have given this explanation, partly because I found the anarchists very good people to work with, and partly because so many people, at least in England, think that anarchism is a peculiarly bloodthirsty and truculent political creed. They connect it with Russian Nihilism, of which they know equally little.

The 'traditional obstacles' in Spain, as in other countries, will always 'win, tie or wrangle.' A military dictatorship is a win, but when, as in 1931, a Liberal Government comes to power they use all their influence, financial and religious, to delay any real reforms. The same kind of amiable futility, which prevented the Social Democrats asserting their authority in Germany, was equally noticeable in Spain. The Government was so careful that it even avoided bringing in Socialists, though they were represented in the Cortes. (The Communists were too weak and divided to be represented, much less to take part in the Government.) Like the German democrats the elderly and mild Liberals in office were always building bridges to help their opponents back to destroy the constitution. They must have known that a number of army officers and reactionaries were intriguing with the dictators in Italy and Germany, but the most they

Europe's Dance of Death

did was to send a notorious 'political general,' like Francisco Franco, to Morocco. This only made it easier for him to continue his intrigues, and organize a coup, helped by foreign intervention.

The more I have seen of Europe in the last two decades the more I am convinced that the essential virtues of Liberalism—its decency, sense of justice, broad-mindedness and respect for the individual—are usually fatal. Economists sometimes talk of 'Gresham's law,' the rule that when good and bad currencies are in circulation together, the bad will always oust the good. Something of the same law seems to operate with Governments and political parties.

In Spain, as in France under Léon Blum, the failure of the Government to implement many of its promises against the opposition of the privileged classes led to some direct action, especially by the peasants. Agrarian laws had been passed to break up the *latifundia*, those immense estates which have done so much to keep the Spanish countryman down to his miserable level. Some industrial laws, to improve factory conditions, had been put through, and, in education, a beginning had been made to undo the centuries of neglect for which the Church had been responsible. Progress was inevitably slow. The peasants began to take the land which was lying idle, the workers to insist on being represented on the management, and everywhere, except Navarre and Andalusia, there was a growing revulsion against the wealthy and reactionary Church.

So strong and widespread was the feeling against the 'traditional obstacles' that they could never have staged a military rising without outside help. Negotiations with Italy and Germany had begun in 1933, and conditions were formulated in the following year. Franco and General Barrera managed the Italian side, and a written agreement was reached in March 1934, whereby Mussolini undertook

Germany Follows Suit

to supply specific quantities of arms and cash, 'to be supplemented if necessary.' The object of the coup was 'to establish a regency to prepare for the complete restoration of the monarchy.' The German negotiations were managed through the Phalangist Calvo Sotelo, and through generals like Goded and Millán Astray. The terms are not known, but it is clear that the new *caudillo* was to be General Sanjurgo or General Mola, both far better soldiers than the little 'drawing-room General' Francisco Franco, whose chief qualifications were his adaptability and his Church connections.

The Spanish plotters had to wait until Italy had finished the Ethiopian war, until Germany had completed her Rhineland coup and come to terms with England, and until it was clear that France and England had moved sufficiently apart politically to make cordial co-operation impossible. By July 1936 everything was ready. Mr. Neville Chamberlain had shown the ascendancy of his group by his speech against sanctions, and a month later the Italians sent several squadrons of aeroplanes to Morocco, some troops to occupy certain points in Spain and the Balearic Islands, and supplies of arms, most of which went at first through Portugal.

One of the 'imponderables,' about which we have little evidence, is the extent of the understanding and co-operation between Italy and Germany. Certainly in those early days it was Italy which 'made the running,' and there is little doubt that Mussolini expected the whole business to be over in the traditional 'six weeks' which Spaniards have learnt is the period during which their successive military coups either succeed or fail. The British Foreign Office also took this view, and seems to have advised Mussolini to get the business through as soon as possible. The English Government, always badly informed about Spain, was probably ignorant of the German intrigues and activities in

Europe's Dance of Death

Catalonia and North Spain. It is possible that Hitler did not intend the rising to take place so early, and that Mussolini attempted to pull off the coup on his own.

The dictators behaved in Spain so like two rival gangsters that their policy can best be described in that language which the English have acquired—painfully and inaccurately—from the films. Mussolini started the Spanish 'racket,' but Hitler, who had also staked out claims there, 'muscle in' forcibly, and with far greater reserves of strength. Stalin, another but more cautious gangster, may also have staked out claims, though the evidence of this is weak. He was a long distance away, and certainly took no part in the business until the Spanish Government had successfully resisted the first military rising, and had appealed to Russia for arms. These were supplied, but only on a commercial basis.

The Italian 'military parade' into Abyssinia had been upset by the unexpected loyalty and unity of the people. Several factors combined to spoil Mussolini's plans for a rapid victory in Spain, and the establishment of a Government which he would be able to control. Sometimes when I was in Spain I would grumble discreetly at the extremely casual habits of the Castilian, their inability to keep appointments, or to do anything up to time. They would reply, with a disarming smile, that luckily there were plenty of people just like them on the other side. The army officers who rebelled were marvellously inefficient. The simultaneous rising, which had been prepared all over the country, only worked successfully in the garrison towns. In the large cities, like Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia, the working men, picking up any available weapons, more than held their own. The militia, most of the navy, and part of the air force remained loyal to the Government and to their oath.

Another important factor was the arrival of a few thou-

Germany Follows Suit

sand volunteers, mostly from France, Czecho-Slovakia and England, with a handful of Italian, German and anti-Fascist refugees. The large Spanish-speaking population in southern France sent its quota. Most of these had had some army training, and they were quickly formed into a serviceable unit, the International Brigade. Naturally those foreigners who were doing relief work saw a good deal of the Brigade. We should all have agreed on the following points. The force never numbered more than about twelve thousand effectives. The French contingent was considerably the largest, especially during the first six months. Many of the men, especially those from France and England, were Communists, but there was no Russian unit, and very few individual Russians fighting in eastern Spain. Some engineers were sent over with the first consignments of arms and materials. They acted as ground staff and helped to set up the aeroplanes which made their appearance in November, four months after the outbreak of the revolt.

The Brigade gave the Government time to begin organizing its first and second armies, the former built up from the militia, civil guards and such sailors and airmen as had remained loyal, the second consisted mainly of quite untrained volunteers. Fortunately for them the inefficiency of the rebel side continued, and there was for some months a marked lack of cohesion amongst their leaders. Sanjurjo died in an accident, Sotelo was murdered. Both General Mola and General Queipo de Llano aspired to lead the revolt, and the former was recognized as the *caudillo* by the army officers. General Mola's death in an aeroplane 'accident' left the pliant General Franco as the only leader, for Queipo de Llano was too temperamental and irresponsible. The latter remained as a thorn in Franco's side, staying always in the south, where he was popular. He avoided going up in aeroplanes.

Europe's Dance of Death

There were four well-marked phases in the war. The first lasted till the end of November 1936. Up to that time Italy, and to a less extent Germany, had sent munitions, aeroplanes, technicians, and money but comparatively few troops. Madrid was expected to fall in the middle of the month, in which case the other Powers would probably have accepted the *fait accompli*, and recognized the dictatorship. The neo-Fascists and the Catholics were extremely active in both France and England, using their influence and financial resources to run an 'atrocities' campaign. Señor Azaña's Government, elderly and Liberal, had few friends except amongst the small groups of violently anti-Fascist Englishmen and Frenchmen. Most people accepted the view that it was primarily a civil war.

When the military rising failed to establish itself immediately, Mussolini had approached his friends in England to help him out. He presumably used the argument that unless the business was over quickly the Germans would take a far greater part in it, and would establish themselves in the Iberian peninsula. This last argument may have been effective. England had at last begun to re-arm, and found herself not only much in arrears, but definitely short of certain materials. France was at that time much engaged in social affairs, and Mr. Baldwin was far too much worried over the growing scandal of Edward VIII and Mrs. Simpson to trouble himself over Spain. It had always been an axiom in British foreign policy that Europe ended at the Pyrenees.

The strong Catholic and pro-Italian bias of the British Foreign Office had been unimportant so long as Italy was a second-class Power, and Spain an 'old Imperial Power gone out of the business altogether.' The bias had helped to keep Italy first neutral and then on the side of the Allies in the 1914 war. It became serious and harmful when Italy

Germany Follows Suit

became aggressive, and Spain suddenly appeared on the front page of the newspapers. The Government, and through them the country, depends much on the channels through which it receives information from abroad. The unconscious prejudices of an Ambassador may give just that slight distortion to news, that slight modification in reports of negotiations which often have a decisive effect on policy. Bismarck, wishing to bring about the Franco-Prussian war, altered a phrase in the Ems telegram, so as to make it sound more truculent. His action was deliberate, but consequences almost as important may come from the 'turn of phrase' which is due to education, upbringing and religion. America is wise in using representatives abroad who are often not 'career Ambassadors.' The English very seldom do, Lord D'Abernon being an exception. Almost all British Ministers are drawn from a tiny class, whose outlook is quite untypical of their countrymen.

Throughout the difficult period of the Abyssinian and Spanish wars the key Embassies at Paris and Rome were held by Catholics. Later the Foreign Office sent out a Minister to Tangier who had an Italian wife, a stepson in the Italian expeditionary force in Spain, and marked Fascist sympathies. One Minister in Spain was a Catholic, his successor was almost childishly prejudiced against the Government. All round the Mediterranean were British representatives with strong Fascist sympathies, and the Consuls were men whose contacts with Italians and Spaniards were of a class which would normally be anti-Liberal. Such appointments could only be justified by a policy of propitiating Italy at all costs. Inevitably they helped to produce the policy, and confirm the original bias of the Government. Although there was much deliberate lying from the front bench of the House of Commons, much calling of white black, yet I suspect that a greyish tinge had been given to

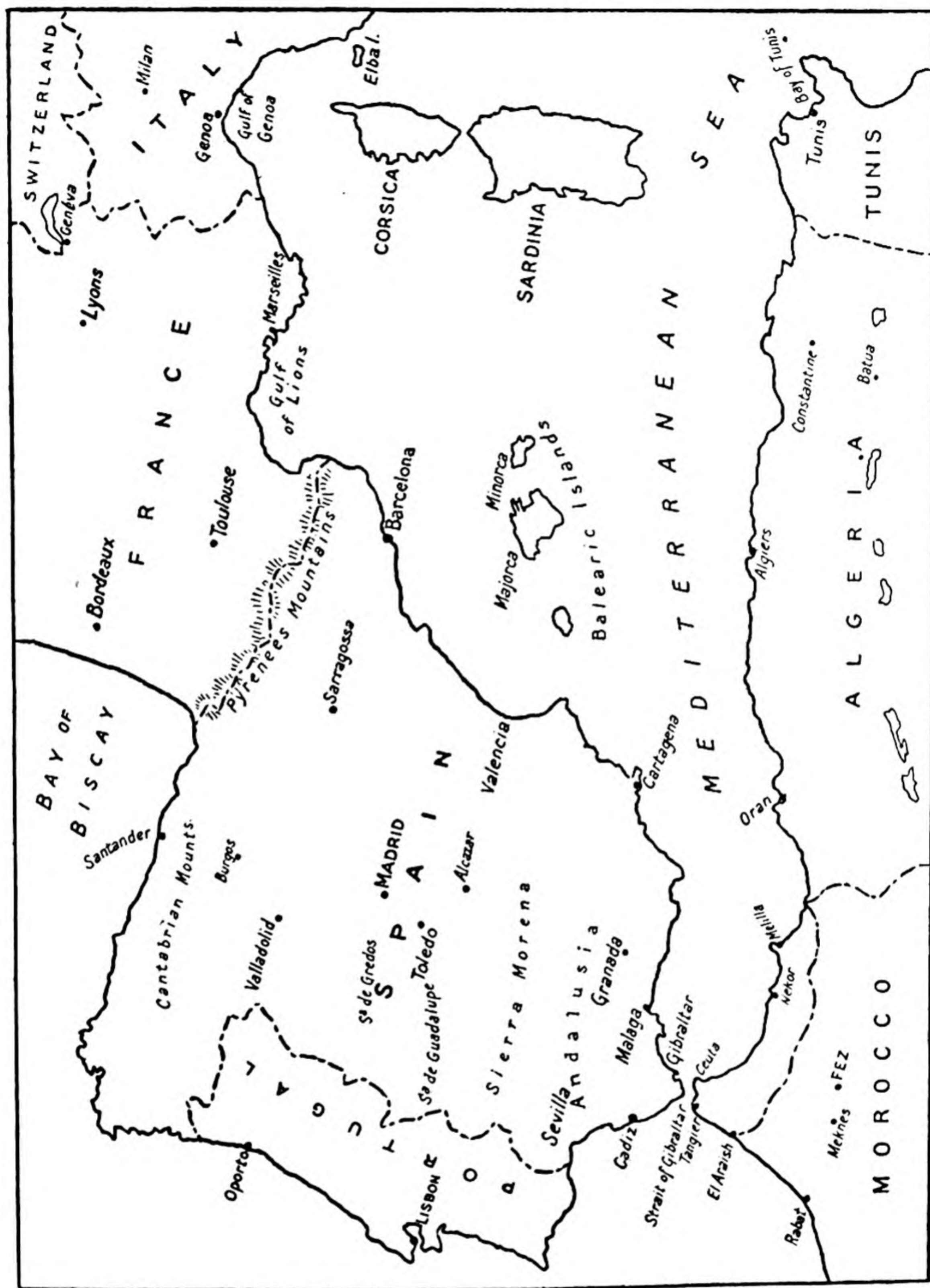
Europe's Dance of Death

the white as it passed through the usual Foreign Office channels.

There is some mystery about the manner in which the British Foreign Office cajoled M. Blum into accepting the Non-Intervention Pact, and still more how M. Blum then persuaded the British Labour Party to swallow this unhappy arrangement. Germany, of course, entered the scheme as readily as Italy. Even if it had been enforced it would help the rebels, who had the arms, as against the ill-equipped Government, but neither Germany nor Italy had the least intention of observing the Pact. Hitler showed his contempt for the British Government by declaring in August, when Germany joined the Pact, that he neither had sent nor would send help to General Franco. Both statements were equally untrue, as is shown by the official German account of the Spanish campaign.

The Non-Intervention Pact was a great victory for the friends of Hitler in England. Ribbentrop arrived in London the same month, August 1936. He began to make his contacts with the group who are, I believe, known as the 'Cliveden set.' The implication in the name may not be wholly fair, but the existence of a set of very wealthy people favourable to the dictators is not open to question. Round them they collected a mass of minor politicians, second-rate writers and third-rate publicity agents. Ribbentrop himself, half aristocrat and half commercial traveller, was perfectly suited to deal with the group whose leaders included a landowning Marquess, peers with great property in Spain, industrialists, financiers, and some Catholics. The group had close connections also with certain newspapers, in which its views found eloquent expression. This group, if not very aristocratic, was at least well represented in the House of Lords. Members of the House of Commons were more careful, but there were plenty of 'back-benchers,'

Germany Follows Suit



SPANISH PENINSULA AND MOROCCO

Europe's Dance of Death

like Sir Arnold Wilson, who were ready to put the case of any Fascist country or leader.

The Non-Intervention Pact was the diplomatic background to the first phase of the war. It is clear that the Entente Powers expected the war to be over by November, when Franco was to make his assault on Madrid. The Non-Intervention Committee met, and Lord Plymouth was appointed Chairman, an appointment which suggested how much importance the British Government placed on its initiative and impartiality. November came, but Madrid resisted the attacks from the Foreign Legion, the Moors, and the regular army, helped by German and Italian planes.

Mussolini was now in a still more difficult position. The military parade period was over, and he knew that he must organize a real expeditionary force in order to ensure a victory by the spring of 1937. He called up several divisions on November 25th and 26th, a fact well known to the British and French Governments, and these were despatched in December to Cadiz. Their arrival was reported in the Press of the world. They went guarded by Italian warships, and some fifty thousand troops were landed. These were all conscripted troops, under regular officers in their ordinary army formation. They were, however, much blessed by the Church, and everything was done to give the campaign the appearance of a crusade. One of the officers, captured at Guadalajara in March, had on him his diary. An entry suggested the atmosphere in which the force started out to Spain.

Noiselessly the pirates of an ideal depart from their Fatherland, on the most wonderful and most sacred adventure. The Commander of the Naples Division conveys to us greetings from the Crown Prince.

Germany Follows Suit

The soldiers have been given amulets with the image of the Christ, the Holy Mother and the Holy Ghost. To-morrow, if all goes well, we arrive at Cadiz. But anxiety continues—after all ours is a pirate ship. But our 'Papa' is protecting us. Warships—ours and foreign.

The German forces were sent more discreetly, and for a time there was a pretence of retaining the 'volunteer' status. Some regiments were, however, sent direct. I remember meeting one German who was doing his army training, and whose regiment was sent to Hamburg to 'practise embarkation.' They were sent to sea and arrived in Cadiz. My friend, who was a doctor and disliked Nazism, deserted and went over to the Government side. At any rate the disregard of the Non-Intervention Pact was blatant and continuous. Russia broke her part by sending munitions, and France soon relaxed the watch over private shipments, but it was only Germany and Italy which sent expeditionary forces.

I always found the greatest resentment amongst members of the Brigade at the dishonesty of the English politicians who deliberately used the same word for themselves and for the regular troops on the other side. Mr. Eden, then Foreign Minister, was the chief offender. When 'his attention was called' to the invasion he merely replied in Parliament: 'I am fully aware that there are Italian volunteers in Majorca—as there are other foreign volunteers in other parts of Spain. I deprecate it, but I cannot deal with this question alone.' The implications of this statement were obviously false.

The British Foreign Office continued its way. It was still gambling on an early Italian victory. March 1937 was then expected as the date of the capture of Madrid, and the ending

Europe's Dance of Death

of the war. In theory this seemed likely enough. I was in Madrid at the time, and we used to listen to the announcement of our approaching doom on the wireless. In the meantime every day brought fresh confirmation of Italian intervention. The British Government chose this juncture to come to what is wittily called a 'Gentleman's Agreement' with Mussolini. The Pact gave Italy certain rights and transport facilities in the countries surrounding Ethiopia. In return Italy promised to stop her radio propaganda against England, recognized an equal interest in the Mediterranean, and agreed to maintain the *status quo*. Mr. Eden avoided publishing the Ethiopian terms until eighteen months later. The subject was not then very popular in England.

The first phase of the war had ended in an Italian disappointment, the second in an Italian rout. I believe that if there is ever an objective history written of twentieth-century history, the battle of Guadalajara will be considered as having had a decisive influence. When we consider the equipment and strength of the Italian expeditionary force, their overwhelming superiority in the air, and the fact that they were a regular army fighting against a hastily collected volunteer force, the utter defeat was far more disgraceful than either Adowa or Caporetto. I took some food out to Guadalajara a few days later. The Italians seemed to have marched down an open road, and when attacked threw down their arms and equipment and fled. From then onwards the Spanish war took on another aspect, and so did Europe. The Italians had had their chance and failed. They were marked out as a definitely second-class Power, in spite of all their braggadocio, and the Germans proceeded to treat them as such.

The third phase of the war was Germany's attack on the enclave of Government territory to the north. The Basque

Germany Follows Suit

and Asturian country still held out, though separated from eastern Spain. Some of the finest fighting men in the country live in that area looking on to the Atlantic, but they were hopelessly short of equipment, and had no aeroplanes. The British Navy helped to see that they got nothing from outside, and during the summer of 1937 the German aeroplanes practised out the technique which was to prove so successful in Poland two years later. They discovered that if one side has complete superiority in the air it is unnecessary to use much artillery or many troops. Aeroplanes plus a small armoured force of tanks is irresistible against infantry armed only with rifles and a few guns. The bombing of Guernica was merely a tiny incident in a campaign, but it shocked a number of good people who were entirely unmoved by the hopelessly one-sided nature of the struggle.

After the battle of Guadalajara the Italian expeditionary force did no more serious fighting in Spain for about a year. A long and thinly protected line divided the peninsula from north to south. Both sides seemed content to leave it so. The Government lacked the equipment and transport to attack on a large scale, the mixed forces on the other side lacked the will. The Germans were content to occupy the northern enclave slowly, taking the whole summer over the task. The Spanish affair was only part of the schemes which were being evolved in Berlin. These plans involved the rape of Austria, and this necessitated keeping Italy fully tied up in Spain and Ethiopia. It may be remembered that Mussolini had offered Austria his protection.

Italy's behaviour during that summer must have tried even the most venal of her supporters in England and France. Mussolini is usually the master of his temperament, but he had planned March 1937 to be the high point of his career, and the beginning of his Mediterranean Empire. He had gone to Libya with the intention of receiving there the news

Europe's Dance of Death

that Madrid had fallen to his gallant legionaries. His telegram to his troops expresses his confidence:

I am receiving on board the *Pola* on my way to Libya the communiqués of the great battle in progress in the direction of Guadalajara. I follow the fortunes of the battle with a tranquil soul because I am convinced that the enthusiasm and tenacity of our legionaries will sweep away the enemy's resistance. To defeat the international forces will be a success of the highest value, including political value. Let the legionaries know that I MYSELF am following their action from hour to hour, and that it will be crowned with victory.

MUSSOLINI.

Alas! the 'tenacity' of the legionaries did not equal their 'enthusiasm.' The great speech to be delivered at Tripoli was postponed *sine die*, a convenient sandstorm being given as an excuse. Mussolini vented his wrath on the British Government, determined that they should share in his humiliation. A week after the dictator had returned from Tripoli, Signor Grandi was instructed to inform the Non-Intervention Committee, still carrying on its futile activities under the British chairman, that 'not a single Italian volunteer would leave Spanish soil until the end of the civil war.' At the same time Mussolini started to break every part of the 'Gentleman's Agreement' which he had made some three months before. The radio at Bari began once more to pour out its scurrilous abuse of England. Then came that extraordinary phase when Italian submarines—pretending if necessary to be part of the 'rebel navy,' which incidentally had no submarines—began openly attacking ships in the Mediterranean, and sinking them.

It is probable that the Chamberlain group would have

Germany Follows Suit

accepted all of this, but the submarine activity touched the French as well as the English on a sore spot, and the Nyon Agreement, with the threat of naval action, ended this business. Even then the neo-Fascist Press in England attempted to show that Russian submarines must have sunk the Russian ships, while Mr. Eden talked about 'pirates of unknown origin.' Ribbentrop, closely in touch with the English group on the extreme Right, must have gathered that England was hopelessly decadent. If she would dance at the bidding of the bombastic dictator of Italy, with his discredited army, how nimbly would she skip under the whip of a real dictator with the German forces behind him. The English group itself, always anxious to salute the rising rather than the setting sun, was beginning to transfer its interest to Germany. If I may be allowed to give a hint to any historian who may be thinking of ploughing his way through the unsavoury mire of English politics in the 'thirties, I should suggest a careful study of the two journalists, Mr. J. L. Garvin of the *Observer* and Dean Inge of the *Evening Standard*. They follow with extraordinary accuracy the swing of opinion amongst the very rich and influential. While Lord Londonderry was visiting Germany, and being entertained by Marshal Göring, Mr. Garvin began to advocate the idea of a German Federation which should include Poland, Austria, Czecho-Slovakia, Jugoslavia, Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria. In fact, just what the 1914 war had been fought to prevent. Dean Inge, who had never said a word for Germany in those years after the war when she was unarmed and Christian, found her altogether admirable when she was belligerent and pagan.

No Englishman who has visited Germany with his eyes open has any doubt about the fine spirit of patriotic exaltation and disciplined self-sacrifice in that country,

Europe's Dance of Death

nor about the sincere wish of the Germans to be good friends with us.

Twenty-three years ago, when we were thinking of nothing less than of war, we were dragged at a moment's notice into a Balkan quarrel which in no way concerned us, because agreements had been made behind our backs with France, and we were more afraid of France, if we stood out, than of Germany.

This was in 1937. The straws show which way the wind was then blowing in Mayfair. While inside Germany the Storm Troopers were beating up the Jews with that disciplined self-sacrifice which so impressed the Dean, the still better disciplined German Air Force was finishing off the war against the Basques and the Asturians, driving them back until they could only surrender or take to the sea. Many thousands escaped in this way to France. Some four thousand of the children were brought to England, where they were immediately the target for the most virulent attacks from the drawing-room Fascists and the Catholic Press. (Although the Basques were good Catholics and the Germans were mostly pagan, this did not alter the views of the Catholic Press about the struggle which they still regarded as a 'crusade.') The bestiality of this campaign, aimed not only at those who brought over the children, but also against the children themselves, was a measure of the way in which the English 'snobbocracy' had lost all British characteristics. I may perhaps be allowed to repeat what I wrote at the time, because it marks what I should perhaps have stressed more in the book, the differences inside England itself.

A few generations ago we were proud of our hospitality to refugees, and recognized that the starving Huguenots had eventually enriched our national life.

Germany Follows Suit

But now we are far less hospitable than most European countries, and it is inconceivable that a similar campaign against the children themselves should have been started in any western democratic country.

The children of the alien rich are, of course, still more than welcome in England. Sir Timothy Taper is the first to meet the sons of an American millionaire and suggest a safe seat in the Commons—'quite cheap, you know. Only the election expenses and two or three thousand a year to nurse the place.' Baghdadi Jews are received with open arms—provided that their poor relations stay safely in the Baghdad bazaar. Siamese and Indian princelets are never accused of polluting our blood so long as the marriage settlements are in order. Children who bring nothing but energy, courage and old traditions are a potential danger.

The Abyssinian affair had done great harm to Europe. The Spanish war did far more to lower the general moral standards in all the surrounding countries. The fourth phase of the war began in the autumn of 1937, and now it was Germany which set the pace and called the tune. While the British Foreign Office was hoping that the Italians and Germans would finish off the business quickly, nothing happened except a partial Government recovery, and in December the successful loyalist attack on Teruel. The English politicians could not see that what suited them would obviously not suit the Germans. Hitler was drawing all the minerals he could get from western Spain, and paying for them in German armaments which were just out of date, but quite good enough for General Franco. Mussolini was getting nothing out of Spain, and had to support fifty to eighty thousand troops in a war which was becoming exceedingly unpopular. He dared not move on his own

Europe's Dance of Death

without German co-operation. There was always the chance of another Guadalajara—in fact, there *was* a minor repetition of that unfortunate incident later in 1938 when the Italians were sent to take Tortosa, failed, and had to be replaced by Moorish troops. Germany, now quite certain that neither France nor England would interfere, could come out openly as Italy's rival. Events were obviously moving towards the taking of Austria. The most spectacular evidence of the way in which Germany prolonged the Spanish war to suit herself was the sending of three ships full of munitions from Hamburg to Barcelona, at a time in the spring of 1938 when it seemed that the Government might collapse from shortage of ammunition.

The autumn of 1937 was marked by an increasingly threatening tone on the part of Hitler, while there was an equally marked tendency in London to dance to his bidding. Ribbentrop had now had a full year in England, and dug himself well in with the group who have so largely influenced Mr. Neville Chamberlain both before and throughout his premiership. Germany's intervention in Spain was now open, and her activities in Spanish Morocco and round Gibraltar were obviously intended to apply pressure on Great Britain at a very vulnerable spot. All this was, however, intended primarily to cover Hitler's preparation for the seizure of Austria, the next victim he had marked down.

It will be remembered that after arranging the murder of Engelbert Dollfuss, the Austrian Chancellor, Hitler had slackened off his efforts. The loyalty of the Austrian army and Italy's objections had prevented him from attempting a coup in 1934. In the three years which followed Germany had first of all increased her military and naval strength immensely, and Spain had helped to show that the quality of her forces was far superior to that of Mussolini's air and land power. With hundreds of thousands of men in Ethiopia

Germany Follows Suit

and Spain Hitler knew that Mussolini dare not try the kind of bluff which had succeeded so well against England and France.

Inside Austria Hitler's agents had been working with that insidious skill which they were later to use in Czechoslovakia and Poland. In Austria it was not a question of organizing a minority, but of forming a Nazi party. In the meantime Hitler adopted his usual practice of making specific promises guaranteeing Austrian integrity—in an Agreement with Austria, signed on July 11, 1936. It was clearly intended to reassure Italy, and its date, it will be noted, was a week before the Spanish rebellion. Germany recognized 'the full sovereignty of the Austrian Federal State,' and promised not to exercise any influence 'directly or indirectly' on the internal affairs of Austria. From then onwards German activity increased, a Council of Seven, under Dr. Leopold Tavs, being the operating body.

As usual this Agreement was applauded by the extreme Right. Mr. Chamberlain and his faithful organ, the *London Times*, thought that it marked the beginning of a new era. The latter affirmed that 'Hitler has brought off another stroke of policy. . . . The agreement with him, which has been freely made by the Austrian Government, cannot but help to stabilize and pacify Central Europe, improve its economic conditions, and pave the way for a permanent settlement between the two branches of the German race.' The wording of this panegyric is interesting. It might almost have been drafted in the German Embassy.

For eighteen months Dr. Tavs worked steadily, and found a certain amount of support amongst the younger Austrians. The Austria of the Treaty of Versailles was an unsatisfactory unit, with Vienna much too large a capital for the truncated area left to it. There was plenty of opportunity for stirring up trouble, and Tavs found in Austria, as

Europe's Dance of Death

Henlein was later to find in Czecho-Slovakia, help from the rich business men who had been taken in by the anti-Communist talk. By the autumn of 1937 the position inside Austria, as well as outside, suggested that the time for a coup was approaching.

Mr. Neville Chamberlain was now firmly ensconced as Premier, and had somehow persuaded himself that all Europe needed was the application of a business man's outlook and methods. At the age of sixty-eight he started on his crusade with the blind determination of a Don Quixote. He began to displace Mr. Eden, and to short-circuit the Foreign Office by dealing direct with Ambassadors. He found a suitable Sancho Panza in Sir Horace Wilson, a civil servant who seems to have talked a diplomatic language which the Premier could understand. Mr. Eden retained his office until the beginning of 1938, when he resigned more on account of the disregard of Foreign Office advice than on any matter of policy. Before then Mr. Chamberlain had gone some way in his new campaign. As a business man he believed in personal contacts, the spoken word. His friends assured him that Hitler was a very fine character, and it should be easy to come to terms with him. Accordingly in November 1937 Lord Halifax went to Berlin.

This mission to Hitler remains, like Lord Halifax himself, a mystery about which I cannot hope to throw much light. I was in India at the time when Mr. Gandhi came to his famous 'pact' with Lord Irwin, as Lord Halifax was then called. My friendship with Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, who had much to do with the drafting of the document, gave me a certain insight into this curious business. My first impression was that the English ruling class had thrown up a man honest to the point of naivete, and allowed him to occupy an important position. His appearance, a certain diffidence

Germany Follows Suit

in manner, his paradoxical mixture of fox-hunting and keen church-going, his scholarship and apparent ignorance of post-war Europe, all fitted into the picture of a Victorian statesman of Liberal tendencies who had accidentally survived into a world which badly needed reforming. Then I found, amongst my Indian friends, another view. They believed him to be a man of strong class prejudices, with what we now call an 'authoritarian' point of view, and capable of almost infinite self-deception. At the time I thought no more about it, but when Lord Irwin reappeared as Lord Halifax, the faithful and trusted friend of Mr. Chamberlain and the extreme Right, I remembered my previous doubts.

It has been said of Mr. Chamberlain that every time he interferes in foreign affairs he murders a country. We do not know what he sent Lord Halifax to tell Hitler, and we are unlikely ever to hear the truth. One minor disadvantage of relying on the spoken rather than the written word is that future historians will have to leave gaps in many of the most important parts of their narrative. It is not hard to believe the current talk that Lord Halifax suggested a free hand for Germany in the south-east of Europe so long as she kept off our colonies, or alternatively that Hitler suggested creating a huge German Empire in Central Africa. Although England is supposed to be a democracy, only a tiny circle know what offers were made by or to England two years before the 1939 war. It is best to chronicle events, and deduce the hidden chain of intrigues as best we can.

As soon as Lord Halifax had returned to England Hitler began to press forward with schemes for the conquest of Austria. Whether there is any connection between these two events is a point on which we have no direct evidence, we only know the sequence. Rudolf Hess wrote to Dr. Tavs, and ordered him to use his Nazi organizations to

Europe's Dance of Death

create disturbances in the first week of April. Dr. Schuschnigg, getting wind of some conspiracy, arrested Tavs in January, and searched his house. This document was found amongst his papers. Hess was then, as now, Hitler's right-hand man. He promised in his letter that German troops would march into Austria as soon as Dr. Schuschnigg took any strong measures to restore order.

It would seem that this conspiracy was decided upon rather hastily, and that the consent of the army chiefs had not been obtained. General von Fritsch, the Commander-in-Chief, protested against this use of his forces, and as a result he, and thirteen of his staff, were summarily dismissed. He was brought back in time to take part in the Polish war, but Hitler does not forget those who, like Schleicher, have withstood him. Fritsch was shot in the back by Storm Troopers in the early days of the war.

The little contretemps about Dr. Tavs, and his dispute with General von Fritsch, only spurred Hitler on to act more quickly. Dr. Schuschnigg was summoned to Berchtesgaden on February 12, 1938, and appeared bringing with him damning evidence about the case of Dr. Tavs. He was not allowed to produce it. Instead he was stormed at by Hitler, and told that he must immediately appoint a well-known Austrian Nazi, Dr. Seyss-Inquart, to a position which would give him control over the Austrian police. A number of other demands were made, the total effect of which would have been to reduce Austria to complete dependence.

Hitler had timed his coup very well. France was without a Government at the moment. In England he and Ribbentrop had had their way. Mr. Eden resigned at the end of the week, to be followed by the more tractable Lord Halifax. In fact Ribbentrop, his work done, was recalled to be Foreign Minister in Germany, and replace the more

Germany Follows Suit

moderate Baron von Neurath, who was suspected of sympathizing with Fritsch. Ribbentrop's last *tour de force* was to be lunching with King George and Mr. Chamberlain on the day when Hitler marched into Austria. After that he returned to Germany fully convinced that under no circumstances would England go to war on any continental issue.

The rape of Austria proceeded along the lines with which we are now familiar. Dr. Schuschnigg vainly struggled to be reasonable, while looking round ineffectually for any Power which would help him. He appointed Dr. Seyss-Inquart, who promptly took his orders from Hitler and from that remarkable character Papen, the former Chancellor, who had now reappeared as Ambassador at Vienna. On March 9th, Schuschnigg, finding his position intolerable, decided to take a plebiscite. This would have certainly produced a majority in favour of independence, and Hitler likes to run plebiscites in his own way. He sent an ultimatum through Seyss-Inquart on March 11th, and then followed it immediately with another demanding Schuschnigg's resignation. On the next day the Germans marched into Austria, and immediately occupied the Brenner Pass on the frontier with Italy. The Gestapo got busy in Vienna, arresting nearly two thousand people, including Dr. Schuschnigg. The Storm Troopers immediately began torturing Jews in a manner which made the decent kindly Viennese sick with shame.

In order that there should be no doubt about the consistency of his Austrian policy, Hitler ordered a wreath to be ceremonially laid on the grave of Planetta, the chief murderer of Dollfuss, while another man, implicated in the murder, was made chief of police. It was just about this time that the ships from Hamburg arrived in Barcelona. The cup of Italy's humiliation was full. The lion had got his prey, and the hyena must keep away. There was nothing for

Europe's Dance of Death

Mussolini to do but regain a little self-respect by insulting the equally humiliated France and England. If Italy had been warned off central Europe she could still make her demands in the Mediterranean. Her students learnt to shout for Tunis, and Corsica and Savoy, her politicians began to hint at the vulnerability of British sea routes.

The attitude of the English towards Hitler's Austrian move went far to justify Ribbentrop's estimate, and to dispel any doubts he may have entertained as to whether Lord Londonderry and the Astors really represented British public opinion. The people as a whole were simply 'flummoxed'—I know no other word to describe the disconcerted bewilderment with which they regarded foreign affairs. The Left Wing were vocal enough, but they had hammered so long at the public about the Spanish business that the comparatively peaceful occupation of Austria seemed rather an anti-climax. The resignation of Mr. Eden and Lord Cranborne may have shaken some Conservatives, but both remained on the Government Benches, and showed no desire to lead a popular movement for the reversal of Chamberlain's foreign policy. Mr. Eden was in no position to do so, as everyone knew who had followed the Abyssinian and Spanish affairs. He kept quiet, and the Premier's faithful clique, in Parliament and the Press, assured their people that the union was inevitable, even if it had been accomplished in a somewhat irregular manner. They pointed out that Austria as left by the Treaty of Versailles was not an economic unit. The Foreign Office spread the idea that this violation of the German-Austrian Agreement would break the Rome-Berlin axis, and thus restore the Italian friendship which we had lost. Others in England comforted themselves by the idea that it would take Hitler some time to absorb Austria, and quoted that dangerous saying about 'giving him enough rope to hang himself.'

Germany Follows Suit

Only a few, who knew their Germany and also had read *Mein Kampf*, could see that Czecho-Slovakia's days were numbered.

Hitler held his plebiscite in his own way. An Austrian of my acquaintance felt so strongly against the *Anschluss* that, although he had decided to leave Austria and make his home in England, he went back to vote. He confessed afterwards that he had voted, but *for* the *Anschluss*. At the open polling booth he found two Storm Troopers, complete with truncheons, standing on each side of him. He was shown where to put his cross. He put it there. It is not always wise to kick against the pricks.

Hitler Becomes Napoleonic

A country's safety, like a woman's honour, is seldom mentioned unless it is seriously endangered. Although the Conservative Press in England treated the Austrian affair as inevitable and complete in itself, it is clear that the Government had no illusions about the threat to Czecho-Slovakia, and that the subject had been discussed with Hitler, if not by Lord Halifax in November, at least by the Ambassador at Berlin, Sir Nevile Henderson. A word should, perhaps, be said about this Ambassador. Officials are not usually a suitable object for criticism. The representative of a country abroad is, however, in a different position from an official at home. Not only is he the sole channel for information back to his own country, but his own personal views are too often taken as typical of those held in his own country. Sir Nevile was an enthusiastic supporter of the appeasement policy, which was natural enough. He went, however, considerably further in his talks, including those which he gave to American and British journalists. He seems to have supported the idea of readjusting European frontiers in a manner advantageous to Germany. Whether it was to be a 'Holy' Roman Empire I do not know, but the general idea was a revival of the 'Mittel Europa' policy which Mr. Garvin and the Astor Press had been advocating.

I had myself left Berlin long before Sir Nevile Hender-

Hitler Becomes Napoleonic

son's term of office, but I retained some friends amongst the correspondents there, whom I visited occasionally. I suspect that the British Ambassador's personal idiosyncrasies had some part in making Hitler believe that he could have a free hand in central Europe. This unfortunately fitted in only too well with the account of England's unwillingness to fight which Ribbentrop brought back from his English friends.

At this juncture Sir Nevile Henderson seems to have been satisfied that German assurances, given to Czecho-Slovakia, were genuine. At any rate Mr. Chamberlain, two days after the Austrian *Anschluss*, made the following statement:

I am informed that Field-Marshal Göring on March 11th gave an assurance to the Czech Minister in Berlin—an assurance which he expressly renewed on behalf of Herr Hitler—that it would be the earnest endeavour of the German Government to improve German-Czech relations. In particular, on March 12th Field-Marshal Göring informed the Czech Minister that German troops marching into Austria had received the strictest orders to keep at least fifteen kilometres from the Czecho-Slovak frontier. On the same day the Czecho-Slovak Minister in Berlin was assured by Baron von Neurath that Germany considered herself bound by the German Czecho-Slovak Arbitration Convention of October 1925.

The threat to Czecho-Slovakia was threefold. First there was Hitler's general attitude towards the *Drang nach Osten*, his constant claims to have special rights in the east of Europe. Next, the existence in Czecho-Slovakia of a German-speaking minority, the Sudeten Germans, who were known to have certain grievances, suggested obvious

Europe's Dance of Death

opportunities for stirring up troubles and for applying Hitler's theories of race and *Deutschtum*. Finally Czechoslovakia was now exposed strategically to a flank attack.

The country, from its shape and its mountainous frontier, has been compared with a lizard, lying in the centre of Europe, her back against Poland, her scaly nose towards Germany, and her stomach resting on Austria and Hungary. the western triangle, the nose, forms one of the great natural fortresses of Europe, and had been further strengthened by a series of defence lines which had cost some fifty million pounds. The Austrian border, however, was flat, and no such special efforts had been made to protect it.

Unfortunately it was in the western salient that many of the Sudeten Germans lived. The word 'Sudetendeutsch' is somewhat misleading. Their connections, industrial and cultural, were not with Germany, but with Prague. They had never been part of the Reich, but only of Austro-Hungary, yet they had always held themselves rather apart from the Czechs and spoke German. Under Austrian rule they had felt they belonged to the ruling race, and liked to retain their separate identity.

Many of the three million Sudetens were industrial workers. They had suffered severely from unemployment owing to the world slump, and to the closing of many markets by high tariffs. The professional classes complained about appointments in the civil service, and there were some troubles about the teaching of languages in schools. No one, however, could seriously contend that the Sudetens were an oppressed minority. They were fully represented in Parliament, and until 1937 there was no separatist movement. Unfortunately, as in Austria, it proved easy to collect the nucleus of a Nazi party amongst the young men, and Hitler had already started to work before the *Anschluss*. He found a suitable leader in Henlein, who

Hitler Becomes Napoleonic

could be trusted to play the same part as Seyss-Inquart had done in Austria. On the other hand, many of the Sudeten Germans were bitterly opposed to the Nazi regime. Some, of course, were Jews, or *Mischlinge*, and there was a strong Social Democrat party, of which Herr Jaksch was the leader.

Within a few weeks of the march into Austria Hitler had, in spite of his assurances to Sir Nevile Henderson, started a campaign at home and abroad to justify, in advance, the dismemberment of Czecho-Slovakia. He played, of course, a different tune in Germany and in the Entente countries, but the British Government, encouraged by its Ambassador, had acquired the habit of disregarding anything which Hitler said at home. This was unfortunate because few dictators have ever said and written so clearly what they intended to do.

The arguments used inside Germany are worth considering because some of them were based on theories which are the very mainspring of the Nazi foreign policy. We, in Europe, are learning not to dismiss some political doctrine merely because it is founded on a travesty of science, or because a convincing and complete reply could be made by any intelligent schoolboy. We may well, in a year or two, find that it has been accepted by a great nation, or even by one's own country. Our friends, or we ourselves, may be put in concentration camps for not subscribing to them. It behoves us therefore to examine the theories of racialism and geo-politics. They fitted admirably with Hitler's ambitions in regard to Czecho-Slovakia. The first justified taking the Sudetenland, the second excused his absorbing the rest of the country. The two theories may be essentially spurious and unscientific, but they appeal to that mixture of conceit and selfishness which makes up the Prussian as well as the Nazi mentality.

Europe's Dance of Death

The theory of a pure Nordic race, possessed of peculiar virtues, goes back long before the time when Hitler was a little Austrian boy, with a grandmother of extremely doubtful 'Aryan' descent. The Kaiser played about with the idea, which in the German mind is confused with an equally unscientific division of people into Aryan and non-Aryan. From time to time some parasitic and unscrupulous writer would curry favour with those in authority by pandering to this queer racial snobbishness. A leading exponent before 1914 was Houston Chamberlain, a renegade Englishman who developed that combination of brilliance and cantankerousness which often characterizes the syphilitic in the early stages of general paralysis.

All these racial theorists wrote at a time when there was still plenty of free academic thought, and some international standards of intellectual honesty. Their flamboyant nonsense was not taken seriously outside certain aristocratic circles in Germany. Some other writers, of more integrity, have lent themselves to the idea of a German super-man type. Nietzsche's 'blond beast' helped to popularize the conception of a tall, fair and all-conquering German.

The ordinary traveller in Germany will probably be struck by the diversity of German types. Only in Saxony do the inhabitants seem to conform to a Nordic type, and they, like the Scandinavians, are an admirable people, but without any marked desire to force themselves and their views on the whole world. The Prussian owes that energy, which makes him such a general nuisance, to the fact that he is a mongrel, with a strong Slav element. The tall fair type seldom becomes a leader in Germany. Ernst was an exception, but he did not survive the 1934 purge. This racial purity business is just nonsense, and its simplest refutation is to remember Rauschning's definition of a

Hitler Becomes Napoleonic

Nordic: he must be as fair as Hitler, as tall as Göbbels, and as slender as Göring.

Geo-politics is a more recent German phantasy, and finds its latest exponent in General Haushofer, President of the German Academy. In some ways the general's writings are as illuminating as *Mein Kampf*. He bases Germany's right to extend on certain 'biological laws,' and he dresses up in pseudo-scientific language the usual question-begging arguments about Germany as a living organism supplanting the dying nations of England and France. Democracy and pacificism are, incidentally, two of the signs by which this omniscient gardener can tell whether nations are moribund or not. The smaller countries, if they are not dying, are regarded as weeds. He accepts as axiomatic the mischievous theory—another false biological analogy—that a country which does not continually grow in area must be unhealthy. Even if the smaller European countries possess empires their own size makes them 'inadequate,' and they can only survive under the protection of greater Powers. 'The shadow of their inadequacy lies over the nucleus countries of the Belgian and Dutch colonial empires, to say nothing of Portugal; over Denmark, the Baltic States, Switzerland and Greece; all of these, in view of their extent of area, are no longer capable of really independent politics.'¹

Another deduction from Haushofer's biological ideas is that the small weed States may be especially harmful if their position interferes with the growth of a Great Power. Holland, for example, stops the natural development of Germany towards the North Sea, and Czecho-Slovakia her natural movement to the south-east. Both of these will have to go. The first to be pulled up must be Czecho-Slovakia;

¹ Herman Rauschnig, in his admirable *Germany's Revolution of Destruction*, 'discusses Haushofer's theories, and his importance in forming such political philosophy as may exist amongst the Nazi leaders.

Europe's Dance of Death

her roots do not go down so deep, and she is more isolated.

Hitler did not talk geo-politics abroad. A very different case was being put before England and France by the Conservative Press, by the usual neo-Fascist and industrialist groups, and by various writers, some of whom were in German pay, and others in England thought that anything in the 'appeasement' line was a good commercial proposition. The English Conservatives had never wholly approved of Czecho-Slovakia. It was a successful democracy, independent in outlook, and inclined to take the lead amongst the smaller States. Beneš was apt to be a nuisance in the League of Nations, and the Little Entente stood rather truculently in the way of what many Conservatives thought were Germany's 'legitimate aspirations' in south-east Europe. Then there were rumours, spread with great assiduity, that the Czecho-Slovak Government was not sound about Russia. English newspapers published stories about aerodromes which Russian planes could use. The German leaders began talking about the 'Bolshevist Hussite Republic' of the 'Czech dwarfs.' Probably few of Hitler's friends in the House of Lords quite followed the point about 'Hussite,' but they all happily swallowed the allusion about Russia. It was, of course, totally untrue. The Czech does not take kindly to Communism, and their Cabinets have been generally ultra respectable and conservative, but that did not matter. As Lord Newton said so truly about the only kind of Englishman that he understands, 'Not one in a hundred knows where Czecho-Slovakia is.'

There were prominent Conservatives who disliked Czecho-Slovakia for other reasons. Lord Rothermere, proprietor of the *Daily Mail*, had long pleaded Hungary's cause, and was then trying to arrange—through Princess Stefanie Hohenlohe-Waldenburg and Hitler—that the

Hitler Becomes Napoleonic

Crown should be offered to his son.¹ Hungary always claimed, and a few months later took, some of the Czecho-Slovakian territory. The French Right Wing were, as always, anxious to get rid of their commitments in Central Europe, and had specially opposed the pledge France had given Czecho-Slovakia. One way and another the republic which Masaryk had founded twenty years before was not likely to get a good 'press' in either of the Entente countries.

Although there was this background of dislike for Czecho-Slovakia the German case, as put in England, turned almost entirely on the Sudetens. The existence of anti-Nazi sections was ignored. There was no money available to advertise the case of the Social Democrats, who regularly polled over 40 per cent of the votes, or of the many non-political Catholics, who had seen what happened in Austria, or of the Jews whom nobody loved. Henlein came to London, and was shown round as if he represented a solid political and racial group numbering three and a half million. Carefully tutored by the Nazis he was extremely moderate, talked of autonomy within the republic, and showed a sweet reasonableness which only the very few Englishmen who knew Czecho-Slovakia intimately could have proved was totally unlike his normal attitude at home. He got plenty of support from the Left Wing pacifists who had spent nearly twenty years decrying the Treaty of Versailles, and now saw an opportunity for a little revision. The fact that it meant scrapping a whole system of defences was not an argument which appealed to them.

At that time there was a wave of isolationist feeling in the country. The east of Europe seemed a confused mess, a lot of States with absurd names and talking incompre-

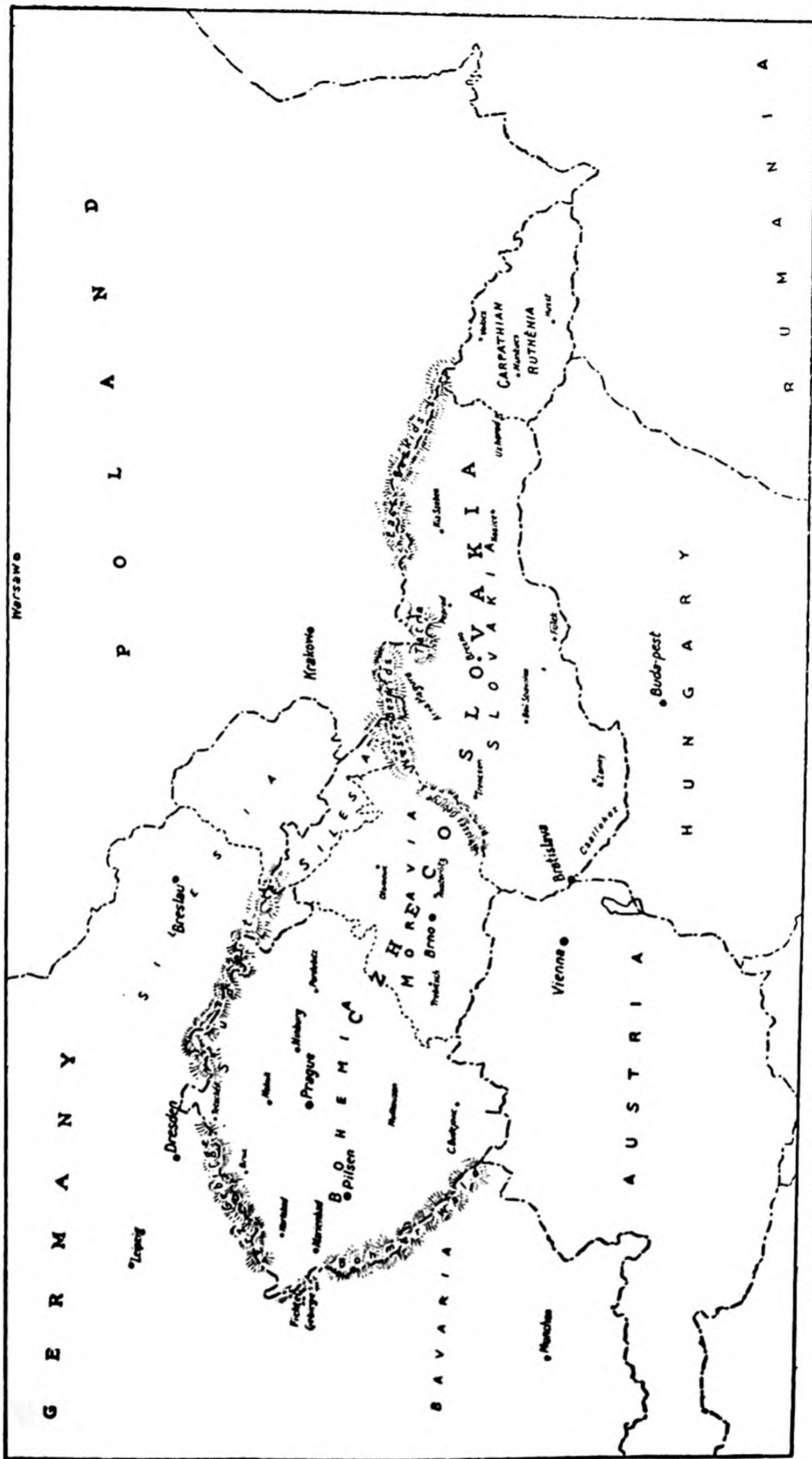
¹ See Hohenlohe-Waldenburg v. Rothermere reported in British Press November 1939.

Europe's Dance of Death

hensible languages. If France chose to tie herself up with them, that was her look-out. All this was a reaction from the Abyssinian and Spanish affairs, about each of which the English had very uneasy consciences. They tried to put themselves in the right by arguing that sanctions had been tried and failed, that non-intervention had been tried and turned into a farce. Somewhere about the end of April, only six weeks after the *Anschluss*, the four men who settled England's foreign policy seem to have decided that appeasement should go as far as letting Germany have the Sudetenland. We do not know whether any of the Cabinet apart from Chamberlain, Halifax, Hoare and Simon knew of the decision. The first step was to show France that England was not prepared to support her in defending the integrity of Czecho-Slovakia.

It has been the custom for Mr. Neville Chamberlain during his premiership to visit the mansions of his more wealthy and extreme supporters at all times of crisis. There, like Sir Walter Elliot reading the 'Baronetage,' he presumably 'found occupation for an idle hour, and consolation in a distressed one.' It was therefore characteristic that he should have selected a luncheon party, given by Lady Astor on May 10th, to make his announcement. He chose to declare himself in an unofficial manner intended for foreign but not for domestic consumption. The party was attended by certain journalists from overseas. Some account of Mr. Chamberlain's remarkable if informal talk appeared in the *New York Times* and other American papers, but none in any English newspaper. Perhaps the fullest report was sent by Mr. Joseph Driscoll to the *Montreal Daily Star*. Some extracts may be given as showing the way the Premier talked and, it must be assumed, was thinking at that time.

This correspondent is now privileged to send what



CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND SURROUNDING COUNTRIES PRIOR TO THE MUNICH SETTLEMENT

Europe's Dance of Death

can be truly called official light on the real British attitude towards Czecho-Slovakia. . . . The accuracy of what follows cannot be disputed, and the fact that it can be released for publication in the form of background information is a testimonial to the growing desire for Anglo-American understanding and co-operation in world affairs.

Perhaps the most dangerous spot in world affairs is Czecho-Slovakia. . . . Nothing seems clearer than that the British do not expect to fight for Czecho-Slovakia. . . . That being so, then the Czechs must accede to the German demands, if reasonable. . . . Der Führer has called for the incorporation of all Germans within the Greater German Reich, but this policy, if carried to an extreme, might take in not only the Sudetendeutsche, but also German-speaking peoples of all Europe and across the Atlantic as well. . . . Frontier revision might be advisable. This would entail moving the frontier back for some miles to divorce this outer fringe from Prague and marry it to Berlin. A smaller but sounder Czecho-Slovakia would be the result. . . . Hitler wants all the Germans he can lay hands on, but positively no foreigners. Czecho-Slovakia cannot survive in its present form, the British are convinced. . . . The Czechs should be practical and make the best terms with Hitler without any war at all.

In this way, at the luncheon-table of an American millionaire, a very decent people, with historic traditions, were condemned to a penance which may last for years. The Prime Minister knew perfectly well that his views would immediately find their way to the Quai d'Orsay and the Wilhelmplatz, acting as a warning in one case and a direct incentive on the other. This method of announcing a life

Hitler Becomes Napoleonic

sentence on a nation may seem bizarre, the arguments used may have displayed an ignorance and conceit which was almost childish, but presumably this was part of the 'business man's technique,' and it was extremely successful at home. The Conservative Press proceeded to blanket the whole affair. They did this so well that it was not until six weeks later that certain Opposition members were able to obtain, after frequent denials, some avowals from the Premier and his hostess. This was after a severe crisis at the end of May, when Hitler, acting on the Premier's advice, massed troops upon the frontier, and President Beneš decreed a partial mobilization. France at that time seemed prepared to stand by her pledge. Very few people in England understood the direct connection between the luncheon party and the German troop movements.

Hitler saw that he must prepare the ground better if he wanted to get Czecho-Slovakia without any fighting. He had to act quickly because the Czech Government was bringing before their Parliament a series of proposals which would have spoilt Henlein's case, and also shown that he did not represent more than a fraction of the Sudetendeutsch. Hitler looked to London for help, just as Mussolini had looked to Paris and London for help in the summer of 1935. Captain Wiedemann seems to have acted as agent, and the procedure adopted by the British Government followed closely the lines of the Abyssinian precedent, except that in this case France did not act with England. Lord Runciman was sent to Prague, without a French colleague, in order to produce the equivalent of the Hoare-Laval peace terms. When Lord Halifax suggested that the French should take parallel action Daladier replied that they had a Legation in Prague.

Lord Runciman comes of a very wealthy ship-owning family which, being free traders by interest, remained con-

Europe's Dance of Death

nected with Liberalism so long as tariffs were a live political subject. In every other respect his views fitted in perfectly with those of Mr. Chamberlain, and he was equally ignorant about Central European affairs. He was an unwelcome guest of the Czech Government with whom his relations were entirely formal. His real contacts were with Prince Max Egon von Hohenlohe-Langenburg, at whose house he had long and secret conversations with Henlein. He saw nothing of the other Sudeten leaders, but only Henlein, who, as we now know and then guessed, was in direct and constant communication with Hitler. While this was going on, the German forces were being massed in ever stronger numbers on the frontier, while the Czech Government, under British pressure, conceded practically all Henlein's demands in what were known as the Karlsbad programme.

Local autonomy was not, however, what Hitler wanted. Again his requirements were made known to Mr. Chamberlain, whose faithful organ, the London *Times*, came out on September 7th with the 'advice' that the Czech Government should 'cede to Germany that fringe of alien populations who are contiguous to the nations with which they are united by race.' Hitler took the hint, and redoubled his attacks on President Beneš, while any attempt to keep order amongst Henlein's Nazi gangs was, as usual, described as 'the reign of terror of the Bolshevist Hussite criminals in Prague.' On September 15th Mr. Chamberlain went to see Hitler at Berchtesgaden. Hitler no longer talked about the Karlsbad programme. He insisted on the immediate handing over of the frontier areas, including the defence lines.

Chamberlain returned to London. By making it clear to the French Government that England would not fight on the Czech issue, he cajoled Daladier into accepting an 'Anglo-French Plan.' It closely resembled the Hoare-Laval Peace Plan in being hopelessly unscientific, displaying

Hitler Becomes Napoleonic

utter ignorance of local conditions, and being obviously designed to make the final absorption of the country inevitable. Germany was to have any area containing more than 50 per cent 'Germans.' The test of whether the population was German was an out-of-date census in which anyone who talked German rather than Czech had been put down as 'German.' Mr. Wickham Steed, the former editor of *The Times*, had happened to be in the country at the time of the census. As he pointed out, he was himself reckoned as one of the 'Germans.' The term included Social Democrats and Jews, who had to fly as soon as the Nazis came. This plan was forced upon the Czech Government which capitulated to what Beneš called 'pressure for which there is no precedent in history.'

To Hitler a surrender is an opportunity for making a severer bargain. In order to be quite fair he has explained his methods in *Mein Kampf*:

A shrewd victor will, if possible, keep imposing his demands on the conquered by degrees. He can then, in dealing with a nation that has lost its character—and that means everyone who submits voluntarily—count on its never finding in any particular act of oppression a sufficient excuse for taking up arms once more. On the contrary: the more the exactions that have been willingly endured, the less justifiable does it seem to resist at last on account of a new and apparently isolated (though to be sure constantly recurring) imposition.

The new imposition in this case was delivered at Godesberg, whither Chamberlain had flown with the Anglo-French proposals. Instead of finding the dictator grateful he was presented with further demands, which nevertheless he undertook to present to Prague. The English Cabinet seems to have protested against these new terms. Sir Horace

Europe's Dance of Death

Wilson was accordingly sent to Hitler with a personal message from Chamberlain. Poor Sancho Panza was merely insulted, and the ultimatum repeated with a time limit. The new demands were that the Czechs should clear out of all areas marked on a map which included many parts in which Czechs were a majority. All German-speaking soldiers were to be discharged from the Czech army, and all military and farm material in the areas was to be handed over. Finally a plebiscite was to be held in certain other areas, and apparently under Nazi auspices.

It may be noticed that in all these one-sided diplomatic moves the only participants were Germany, England and France. Russia was pointedly omitted, except that on September 23rd Litvinov had been asked by Earl De La Warr, the British representative at Geneva, what Russia's attitude would be if England and France were involved in a war against Germany on account of Czecho-Slovakia. The reply was quite specific. Russia was ready to co-operate with Britain and France, and would start staff talks. I see no reason to believe that the Russian offer was not genuine, and that possibly this was the last chance of keeping Russia on the side of the democratic Powers. Chamberlain was still following his appeasement policy, and completely ignored the Russian offer. Instead he turned to Italy to use her good offices, and persuade the Führer to come to terms.

One of Mr. Chamberlain's curious habits, which make it difficult to believe in his sincerity, is to make extremely optimistic speeches shortly before a crisis which he knows is coming and does not know how to meet. On September 27th he broadcast to the country about 'a quarrel in a far-away country of which we know nothing.' Some of his listeners knew quite a lot, but the English have a curious regard for any politician who coyly pleads complete ignorance of the subject with which he is supposed to be

Hitler Becomes Napoleonic

dealing. Then he assured England that 'after this Sudeten German business is settled, that is the end of Germany's territorial ambitions in Europe.' One may now ask the grounds on which he made that statement. It may have been Hitler's own promises. Certainly Chamberlain fell under the spell. On the next day he described, in the House of Commons, how impressed he had been by the Führer's 'rooted distrust and disbelief in the sincerity of the Czech Government.' Perhaps he had been won over by the noisy clique who were doing Hitler's propaganda for him in England. Possibly—and this is a theory to which I personally incline—the whole business had already been settled between England, Italy, France and Germany. Mussolini was to intervene, the Führer would condescend to arrange another meeting at which he would get all his terms and more. Mr. Chamberlain and M. Daladier, having scared their countries into thinking they were on the brink of war would acquire great merit by negotiating a last-minute peace. Men who had staged the Zinoviev letter business in 1925, and the 'gold standard' crisis in 1931 are not incapable of a certain subtlety. The scare was worked effectively. The Fleet was mobilized, but the preparations against an air raid on London—a few trenches dug, a few gas masks distributed—were of an inadequacy that immensely deepened the gloom.

On the morning after his broadcast it appears that the Foreign Office heard that the Führer, on Mussolini's intervention, had agreed to another meeting. That afternoon the House of Commons listened to a laborious and lamentable speech from the Premier. It was full of his usual pathetic appeals as a much tried old man struggling with adversity. Just as he seemed to reach a crisis when he would have to state what were England's intentions, Lord Halifax appears to have sent a message into the House. Mr. Cham-

Europe's Dance of Death

berlain, without giving himself time to consider its import, told the House that 'Herr Hitler invites me to meet him at Munich to-morrow morning. He has also invited Signor Mussolini and M. Daladier. Signor Mussolini has accepted, and I have no doubt that M. Daladier will also accept. I need not say what my answer will be.'

There followed one of the most regrettable scenes in English parliamentary history. Here was the English Prime Minister being summoned to Munich under duress, just as Schuschnigg had been called to Berchtesgaden, to hear terms which meant the complete destruction of a small and law-abiding democracy. Instead of the House adjourning quietly to allow the Cabinet to discuss the matter, the Members on both sides gave way to a kind of mass hysteria. Their behaviour was in no way reflected in the country as a whole. It was well calculated to prove to Hitler and the world that the news which Ribbentrop had brought back was correct. All England wanted was peace at any price. On that miserable day, September 28th, democracy showed its utter ineffectiveness. If there was ever a time for sober quiet thought it was at that crisis. It seemed that Bagehot's estimate was too generous for 1938. Any ordinary six hundred Englishmen would have contained some who would have seen through the histrionic trick played upon them by Chamberlain and Halifax.

At Munich four of the five great European Powers met together. Russia was not invited. Neither England nor France protested against the omission, though it was clear that the integrity of Czecho-Slovakia affected Russia more than Italy. Munich completely broke the Czechs, who were not brought into consultation, but merely had to accept, like criminals condemned in their absence, terms more far-reaching than ever. Munich also broke Litvinof and all the elements in Russia which had been working to bring her

Hitler Becomes Napoleonic

into European politics. A few months later Litvinof was replaced, and Russia started on a new career.

Chamberlain flew back to London. Because he is neither a very well-read nor intelligent person, he could think of no happier phrase than that used by Disraeli sixty years before. He said he had 'brought back peace with honour.' In neither case was it true, but the old Jewish statesman had, at least, stood up to Bismarck and earned the Iron Chancellor's respect. It was some years before the Treaty of Berlin was seen to contain in its terms the seeds of future wars. Mr. Chamberlain's shoddy peace-making had hardly lasted a month before Hitler's future plans were apparent to the whole Continent.

Only one Cabinet Minister resigned over Munich. Mr. Duff Cooper, like many of the younger Conservatives, did not share Mr. Chamberlain's 'confidence in the good faith and in the word of Herr Hitler.' The Labour and Liberal parties gradually recovered their balance, and apart from the extreme pacifists they were critical. So was Mr. Churchill, and in a milder way, Mr. Eden. The division over Munich cut across the ordinary party loyalties, and for that reason the opposition was ineffective. Many of those who supported the Agreement did so on the grounds that some respite was necessary to re-arm and arrange for air raids. They comforted themselves by thinking that the Agreement only gave Germany a piece of territory in which many of the people were German-speaking.

To some extent English opinion was affected by a remarkable campaign, which we can only ascribe to Hitler's Fifth Column, the object of which was to emphasize the comparative weakness of the French and British air forces. In this, Colonel Lindbergh played some part. I myself heard him speaking at a small private lunch. He claimed that Germany was far stronger in the air than Britain, France,

Europe's Dance of Death

Czecho-Slovakia and Russia combined. He was, at that time, both admired and liked in England. His opinion, which was supposed to be completely unbiased, carried much weight. We have since learnt that he had no real evidence on which to base his extremely dogmatic assertions.

The attitude of France before Munich has been the subject of much controversy. I believe that, on the whole, it was England which led the retreat. Mr. Alexander Werth, for whose opinion I have the greatest respect, has taken the view that the defeatists in France, the 'Munichois,' were equally strong, determined and influential. Certainly M. Bonnet and M. Flandin seemed prepared to go as far as Mr. Chamberlain in appeasement, and there was a very fierce clamour from the Right against sacrificing the youth of France in a Czecho-Slovak quarrel. There is little satisfactory evidence on which to form an opinion about the responsibility for Munich. France was, of course, more definitely bound by treaty to support Czecho-Slovakia than was England, at least up till September 30th. I found, when I was in Prague after Munich, that the Czechs themselves were far more bitter against France than England. This was exactly the reverse of my experience in Eastern Spain a year earlier. On the Government side in Spain there was no doubt about England being chiefly to blame for the dishonest business of non-intervention. In such matters the views of the chief sufferers have some weight.

I went to Prague for a committee which was engaged in getting refugees out of the country. Those whom we were trying to help were men and women who had fled from the confiscated area in front of invading hordes of Gestapo agents and Storm Troopers. Some were men who had been prominent in the Social Democrat movement, the men whom Lord Runciman so carefully disregarded. There were others who had fled from Germany and Austria into

Hitler Becomes Napoleonic

Czecho-Slovakia when it still seemed a safe refuge. Doing work of this kind it was impossible to avoid acquiring certain information, noticing certain details which made it impossible to accept the conventional view of the Munich Agreement. I became convinced that the British and French Governments knew before Munich that Hitler intended to take the whole of Czecho-Slovakia, and that after Munich they made not the slightest attempt to prevent or even discourage him from doing so. I also believe that the course of the political negotiations before Munich, including the Runciman mission, were complicated by and sometimes subordinate to certain financial transactions involving interests in London, Berlin and Prague.

Dr. Jaroslav Preis, head of the Czech Zivnostenska Bank, was the key man in these negotiations. Although he was supposed to be a loyal supporter of the Czech Government, and his position gave him immense influence, he was actually in close touch both with Henlein and later with the Runciman mission. He made frequent visits to Berlin, before and after Munich, and was with General Göring on October 5th, the day when President Beneš was forced to leave his country under German pressure. American correspondents reported as early as July certain transactions of the bank which would be difficult to explain except under the assumption that the transfer of all and more than the Sudeten area was confidently expected. Hitler, in fact, had his Fifth Column in Czecho-Slovakia, as in England and France. It was, as in the Entente countries, small in numbers, but extremely influential and well placed in the tiny world of international finance. The Czechs could not have been betrayed from within if they had not also been betrayed from outside, but the two processes went on together and conjointly.

After Munich the Czech Government merely carried on

Europe's Dance of Death

as temporary caretakers. No one imagined that the regime would last more than a few months. Gestapo agents were everywhere, including the Government offices, and as many of these men are corrupt there was little difficulty in finding out the course of events. In February I sent back a report received from a very reliable source giving the date on which the agents were to cause disturbances in Slovakia, and that on which Hitler was to march into the country. They were correct within twenty-four hours, but no paper would publish these facts except the Communist *Daily Worker*. In the previous months the Germans had simply marked out their own frontier, occupying any strategic points and any towns which they wanted, irrespective of whether there was a nominal 50 per cent 'German' population or not. The Berlin Ambassadors' Conference, which was supposed to function under the Munich Agreement, simply did not operate at all. Under the Germanophile Sir Neville Henderson it allowed Hitler a perfectly free hand.

The Munich Agreement, like the Hoare-Laval Peace Plan, was merely a device for making the aggressor take two bites at his cherry, this being considered better international manners. The completely subservient position of the Czech Government after President Beneš had been forced to leave must have been apparent to the British representatives in Prague, even if it could not have been deduced by general reasoning and common sense. By January the impending fate of the country was equally clear, even to the approximate date of the invasion. It is therefore very difficult for an Englishman to give any reasonable explanation of two actions taken by the British Government.

The first was the £10,000,000 'loan' to the Czech Government, the 'conscience money' which was supposed to be paid after Munich. The arrangements under which this was transferred, the delays and conditions involved, meant

Hitler Becomes Napoleonic

that in practice £6,000,000 was handed over to the incoming Nazi Government. The remaining £4,000,000 was earmarked for refugees. It was only through the strenuous objections of certain private individuals, interested in relief work, that this balance also was not put at the disposal of the Nazis, to be worked through a puppet organization, which would have merely helped them to expel some of their richer opponents after taking all their money. This is the first point, for which I have never seen any satisfactory explanation. The Czechs certainly assumed that it was connected with the financial negotiations previously mentioned.

The second point is equally mysterious. At the beginning of March, when the British Foreign Office knew perfectly well that Czecho-Slovakia had only a few days to live, Mr. Chamberlain assembled the foreign journalists in London, and assured them that the policy of appeasement was at last proving successful and promising a new era of peace in Europe. The Stock Exchange, never too well informed about foreign affairs, responded cheerfully, and so—as I mentioned in the first chapter—did the faithful exponent of all that is comfortable, the weekly *Punch*. When the suburban reader was enjoying his cartoon of John Bull waking up from his winter nightmare, Hitler was marching into Czecho-Slovakia. Only slowly did the English understand all that Hitler had gained, and the Entente had lost. He had occupied a country with a man-power of fifteen millions. He acquired the Skoda armament works, and also a huge stock of guns, aeroplanes and munitions, which were to be used against England within six months. He demobilized an army of 800,000 men, well-equipped and with two thousand aeroplanes. He commandeered about £70,000,000 gold reserves and foreign credits, some of which had recently been contributed from the British Treasury. Finally he added to Germany a large area of good

Europe's Dance of Death

agricultural land and forests. Bismarck once remarked that the Balkan question was not worth the bones of a Pomeranian grenadier. He would have admired the economy by which all this loot was got without the loss of a life.

At the beginning of this book I suggested that those who were working abroad during the Chamberlain era built up their case against him by using the same methods as Sherlock Holmes. I think the comparison was fair, and may be taken a stage farther. Those who have read Conan Doyle's classic will remember that, unlike some modern detective writers, he seldom follows his criminal into court, and if possible never gets him there. Many of the stories end in the guilty man confessing, committing suicide, or dying by accident. The author knew that Sherlock Holmes would hardly ever have been able to obtain a conviction in a court of law. His methods were sound, but they depended on building up a case by a mass of small inferences, of which many could not have been given as legal evidence. The same difficulty exists to a far greater degree in the field of foreign politics. The Government defenders can say, as would most of Sherlock Holmes' criminals, 'That's all very fine, but take your case into court and prove it.' There is, alas! no court, impartial and international, before which one can drag dictators and Prime Ministers, no court which would have the power to make embassies disgorge their papers, banks produce their accounts and international financiers tell the truth.

The seizure of Czecho-Slovakia, and the usual horrors of Jew-baiting and wholesale arrests which accompanied it, caused a great stir in France as well as in England. It entirely belied the comforting idea of 'a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing'—Mr. Chamberlain's description only six months before. The conventional view was that the British Premier was horrified by

Hitler Becomes Napoleonic

the new turn of events, and that he had believed Hitler had no ambitions beyond gaining back his own racial kindred. We might call this the Don Quixote view of Mr. Chamberlain. On the evidence I find it quite incredible. We can, however, trace a very rapid and complete change of policy. This seems to have been due to two causes.

The first was that Hitler began similar threatening tactics towards Poland within a week. On March 21st Germany occupied Memel, and on the same day Ribbentrop told the Polish Ambassador in Berlin that Poland must be prepared to give up Danzig, and also a strip of land across the so-called Polish Corridor.

The other disturbing factor was a threatened revolt inside the Conservative party. The history of the Hoare-Laval Peace Plan was, in a way, being repeated. Baldwin had not educated his people as to his real policy with regard to Italy and Abyssinia, nor had Chamberlain ever confessed what would be the logical and inevitable result of appeasement. The English had accepted the idea of acceding to Hitler's racial theories, but they had never heard of his 'geopolitics,' and the territorial aims about which all Europe was talking. For some years all news had been stifled in the Conservative Press, and only given in a rather apologetic manner in the less widely circulating Labour and Liberal papers. All through the Munich crisis and afterwards, considerable semi-official pressure was brought to bear on editors and still more on newspaper proprietors to cut out anything which might be offensive to German ears. England, for example, heard far less than America about the Jewish pogroms and other atrocities.

Having recovered from any particular feeling of relief over the avoidance of war in September 1938, people on both sides of the Channel began to inquire why the British and French forces had been so ill-prepared. The English

Europe's Dance of Death

added up the sums of money spent on the three fighting services since 1931, and asked what had been done with these colossal sums. All this reflected badly on the Government, and the Conservatives. This feeling, and a general weariness of always living in a crisis atmosphere was reflected in the constituencies, and on the back benches of the House of Commons. The resulting pressure induced the Premier and his three principal advisers—Hoare, Simon and Halifax—to make an extremely hasty and probably unwise decision. On March 31st, just a fortnight after the march into Prague, Mr. Chamberlain guaranteed the integrity of Poland. The actual wording was as follows:

In the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence, and which the Polish Government, accordingly considered vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all support in their power. They have given the Polish Government an assurance to that effect.

A glance at the map and a few obvious considerations are sufficient to suggest the doubts and difficulties involved. Czecho-Slovakia would have been hard enough to help, but the country was fairly easy to reach by air, and had a first-class army and some defences, natural as well as artificial. Her people were educated, efficient and largely industrialized. Poland has no natural boundaries of any strategic importance. Her army was only second-rate, her air force negligible, and the country had few industrial resources for producing munitions and equipment. If Mr. Chamberlain had consulted those who knew what happened in the Spanish war he would have learnt that such an army and a country cannot resist an attack by far superior air power accompanied by a mechanized army. There was

Hitler Becomes Napoleonic

only one way in which the pledge to Poland would have any meaning. She must be able to get assistance by land and air. In other words, the guarantee was almost valueless without Russian assistance. It was given without any consultation with Russia. In fact, the Ambassador was only informed on the day it was made.

It is almost as difficult to write about Russia as about the Vatican, in both cases because of the fierce religious and political feelings aroused. Perhaps it would be best if I started with the assumption that Catholicism and Communism are two mysteries which are too deep for me to understand. All that is necessary for our purpose is to understand that both the Pope and Stalin have influenced foreign politics, and in so far as they have done so their actions and statements can be judged realistically by the ordinary standards. I should refuse, for example, to write about the development of Mussolini's aggressive policy without mentioning the Lateran Treaty of 1929, because I am convinced that the Concordat had an appreciable influence on the Duce's subsequent behaviour. Similarly it is best to consider Russia's foreign policy without worrying too much about her motives at any particular epoch, and just picking out the few relevant facts.

In the chapter on Germany after the war I mentioned the close understanding which existed between Germany and Russia, especially so long as General von Seeckt was in charge of the army. There is no reason to believe that this connection, which included the exchange of arms and personnel, ceased at all suddenly, though it probably grew very tenuous during the first years of Hitler's rule.

The next point is that Russia, traditionally strong in defence and ineffective in attack, showed no overt inclination to aggression between 1917 and 1939. She made no attempt to overawe her Baltic neighbours. Thus in 1924 a

Europe's Dance of Death

Communist insurrection broke out in Esthonia, and was suppressed mercilessly. Russia could easily have interfered, but the Soviet Union took no action. During Litvinof's long period of office he maintained a strictly correct attitude as a member of the League of Nations, an attitude often far more helpful than that of France or Great Britain.

Dictators seem to need an external enemy. Even at the time of forming the anti-Comintern Pact, the newspapers and Stalin himself continued to refer to England and Poland as the chief enemies. Soviet Russia's deep-seated and instinctive hatred is against these two countries, the first thwarted any hopes of a world revolution, and the second was the only country, up till 1939, with which the Union had been at war. I am inclined to think that the English took Hitler's verbal attacks on Communism too seriously, and assumed that they were causing a breach which could never be healed. The Entente Powers should have remembered the wireless at Bari which from 1935 onwards, was pouring out the most astounding abuse and innuendoes, aimed at British and French subjects in the Near East. Yet at this time England and France were doing their best to establish better relations with Italy. In the modern world these tactics of abuse have no particular importance, and being a matter chiefly between Governments the stream of insults can be turned off and on at will. The two countries might even have remembered the Anglo-phobia which immediately preceded the formation of the Entente.

The point of this digression is that Russia in, say, 1937 had no reason for feeling the least loyalty or friendliness towards any Great Power. It is probable that the purge in that year cleared out the last of those who had worked in well with Germany during the 'twenties. It left Stalin completely free. Litvinof was the only survivor from the time when I was in Russia, all the rest were dead or in prison

Hitler Becomes Napoleonic

except Trotsky, who was in exile. Litvinof, a cultured Jew married to an Englishwoman, would by instinct have been a 'good European,' and possibly he was able to persuade Stalin that this was the best policy until Munich. This Agreement showed that the Entente Powers were quite ready to combine and sacrifice a small Power, either at the dictates of international finance, or because it suited their own convenience when they were not ready for war. To Russians the Munich Agreement was a dictation to Europe by four Great Powers which had pointedly omitted her from their counsels. By its complete condonation of aggression it marked the end of the League as a serious factor in Europe. Litvinof took himself and his Generals back to Moscow. He gradually faded into the background, and in May he was succeeded by Molotov. Stalin could sit back and wait until the four Powers fell out. Then he could adopt the traditional British policy and hold the balance. Since aggression was now fashionable he was admirably situated to do a little himself.

He did not have to wait very long. Having given a guarantee which they were physically unable to implement the British Government had to look for allies in East Europe, and were busily engaged in doing so within the following month. England was helped in the south-east by Italy practising a little piece of aggression on her own. On April 7th Signor Mussolini seized Albania by force. A week later England guaranteed Greece and Rumania. She then opened negotiations with Turkey and Russia. The first was successful, but a curious inhibition seizes the British Foreign Office and Conservative ministers when they deal with the Soviets. At any rate the business drifted on, first with Litvinof and then after his dismissal with Molotov. A minor official was sent from London to carry on the negotiations.

Europe's Dance of Death

The attitude of England towards these comings and goings was very curious. The Conservatives loathed the whole business, but they recognized a Russian settlement was the one hope of peace. A premature report of a settlement produced what was known as a 'Bolshevist boom' on the Stock Exchange. The Left wing parties would insist that Russia was coming into a peace front on ideological grounds. There was not much reason for thinking so, especially after Litvinof had gone, but their certainty about this, their 'inside information' from the Russian Ambassador probably encouraged Chamberlain to be a very dilatory wooer.

We do not know at what period during the summer the Nazis got into touch with Stalin and suggested a revival of the military agreement which Seeckt had negotiated. The first overtures made by Count Schulenburg, the German Ambassador in Moscow, were kept very secret. A pact would mean that Hitler would have to swallow a good many naughty words which he had used. He could not afford to do so unless he knew he would get his Agreement. Paris was 'worth a mass,' and Poland and Danzig were well worth a recantation. On August 21st the Pact was signed, Ribbentrop going in person to Moscow for the purpose. Ten days later Germany invaded Poland, having previously arranged that Russia should occupy Eastern Poland at her leisure. Few people troubled to recall that the procedure, and even the line of demarcation in Poland was almost the same as Seeckt had proposed to Russia in 1922, in case of the war breaking out again with France and England.

To an Englishman, who is not a Conservative, the fury of Conservatives over Hitler's *volte-face* had its amusing side, though Heaven knows the results are serious enough. Hitler had certainly used wild and whirling words against Communism, but they were only coarser, they were not

Hitler Becomes Napoleonic

more bitter than those habitually used from Conservative platforms in England. Hitler may have helped himself to power by his attacks on Russia, and by using the Russian danger as a bogey. The Conservatives also put themselves into power in 1925 by working up a Russian scare, far more absurd and far-fetched. Russia could possibly attack Germany, but not England. A very foolish ecclesiast in England likened Stalin to Judas. Someone unkindly asked who, in all this sordid business, was cast for the role of Christ. The war of 1939 followed inevitably from the four years which preceded it. The invasion of Finland follows logically from Munich.

The War

The events of the last four or five years in Europe have been like the successive acts of a Greek tragedy. We have felt ourselves being urged along by forces as irresistible as Destiny. The climax is the war, but neither climax nor war mark the end. In time Europe may reach the ultimate catharsis, the process of cleansing or expiation. This may free us from the curse, like that of the House of Atreus, which has hung over our Continent for more than a generation. It would be dangerous to push a literary analogy too far, but the sequence of the Greek tragedies does seem to conform to a sequence in human life. From time to time men have this urge towards self-destruction. On their way they commit further crimes, as Agamemnon slew his daughter, Clytemnestra her husband, and Orestes his mother. Many uneasy ghosts lurk at the back of our consciousness—China, Abyssinia, Spain, Austria, Czechoslovakia, the Jewish pogroms, Poland and Finland—all these and other tragedies demand expiation, but they only seemed to hasten the movement towards violence, more violence, and then sheer barbarism.

The European tragedy lies in our own minds. It has not been caused by any natural calamity, by any incursion of enemies from outside, but is the product of our misdirected energies, of the common will. We may ask, like the Spirit of the Pities,

The War

Why prompts the will so senseless-shaped a-doing?

and the Spirit of the Years will answer,

*I have told thee that it works unwittingly,
As one possessed, not judging.*

In this book I have attempted to show how some of Europe's leaders have attempted ineffectually to shield their people from their destiny while others have voluntarily joined the avenging furies. The great mass of the people, and most of their leaders, have been but vehicles for influences, malign and mischievous. No part of Europe, no group of individuals, can be wholly free from responsibility for the cruel and bestial actions which have disgraced the last few years. In England and France, and to a lesser extent in the other democracies there have been political subterfuges and evasions, sins of omission, divided loyalties, the falsifying of news, and the shoddy internationalism of financiers. These have directly encouraged aggression and brutality. The shape of European politics in the last decade is due to the interlocking of two evil things, one active and the other passive. It would be a misreading of history to assume that the only effective evil has been the spirit of ruthless aggression which we first connected with the Powers of the Anti-Comintern Pact, and now with their former adversary Russia. If we must attach personal names to policies and movements, then 'Chamberlainism' is the counterpart and also the complement of 'Hitlerism,' but by each of these terms I mean something much more than the work of two individuals, whose importance may have been exaggerated. As, however, the present war has been described as a struggle against 'Hitlerism' we had better give these two names to two systems which extend in space beyond England and Germany, and reach back in time

Europe's Dance of Death

before either Mr. Chamberlain or Herr Hitler had emerged from obscurity.

'Chamberlainism' is the product of successful business men in Western Europe, and is powerful where they control the Government. The so-called policy of appeasement would certainly not have appealed to nineteenth century Conservatives. At home and in the Empire 'Chamberlainism' was Conservative enough, reforms were introduced slowly and with full regard to vested interests. It was in foreign affairs that a new policy was adopted, and was accepted by the French Government, and to some extent by other neutral Governments. Stated crudely but honestly, the basis of 'appeasement' was the sacrifice of certain small independent countries in order to satisfy two Powers, Italy and Germany, which had threatened aggression. Obviously it could not be put forward in this form. It was necessary to hide the nature of these transactions both from the probable victims, but also from the mass of the people in England, France and the western democracies.

The tricks and deceptions which had to be practised in pursuance of 'Chamberlainism' have been described in the last three chapters. They could only have been effective in countries where the democratic machine had ceased to function properly, but this, for reasons we have discussed, was the case in both England and France. News from abroad was distorted and suppressed, negotiations were carried on surreptitiously and then strenuously denied, while every independent critic was labelled as a war-monger. The real begetters of the policy kept in the background, but helped the politicians by using their influence to smother opposition. The big banking corporations, and bodies like the Federation of British Industries, or the *Comité des Forges*, were the driving force behind 'appease-

The War

ment,' and they also carried on direct negotiations with similar groups in Italy and Germany, which they thought, erroneously, were equally influential.

One weakness of such a policy, and also of the 'business man's' approach to such questions is that they depend on some measure of honest co-operation from the countries which are being 'appeased.' This they never got. 'Hitlerism' is not a product of big business, though many of its Left wing opponents assumed that it was. Both Fascists and Nazis owed much to the financial backing they received from certain business men before they achieved power, but afterwards neither Mussolini nor Hitler allowed such men to influence, much less to direct, their foreign policy. The richer classes in England and France have had matters so much their own way that Mr. Chamberlain's friends and the French 'Two Hundred Families' assumed that the corresponding groups in Italy and Germany would be sure to come to the top. They were totally wrong. Both the Nazi and Fascist movements began as Caves of Adullam to which went 'everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented.' They received powerful backing from the extreme Right wing politicians and also from certain business interests, but these did not get control of movements which were far more dependent on the support of the army and their own uniformed followers.

Mussolini was by upbringing a socialist, and very suspicious of capitalists. Hitler's dreams were of power and world domination. He was not interested in the comfortable prosperity which the Hugenburgs, Thyssens and Schachts might be able to offer. Such men were invaluable in the early days when the party needed money, they were useful later in their contacts with the all-powerful financiers in England and France, but they were discarded ruthlessly

Europe's Dance of Death

when their work was done. It was symptomatic that the Federation of British Industries published its proposals for Anglo-German co-operation, which had been worked out with the German industrialists, on March 15, 1939, the day of the invasion of Czecho-Slovakia. It is obvious that the men with whom the English business men were in touch had no knowledge of what their Government was doing. Many of them, including Thyssen himself, are now in exile. Dr. Schacht, close friend of and collaborator with Mr. Montagu Norman, still occupies a subordinate position in Germany, but he was never a controlling force in Nazi policy. These men, perhaps unconsciously, had done much to mislead the ruling classes in France and England as to the nature of 'Hitlerism.' They helped to persuade people, who were only too willing to be deceived, that the Nazis leaders had only to be indulged at first and they would become amenable to those influences which the very rich believe to be irresistible. By the summer of 1939 Hitler needed them no longer.

Mussolini had not given much help to the appeasement policy. He had been extremely difficult through 1936 and 1937, but the Entente had managed to get through the Abyssinian and Spanish affairs without more than a loss of self-respect. Hitler made no attempt to co-operate at all after 1938, and the policy therefore broke down altogether because the two Entente Governments could not go on hoodwinking their own peoples. The Munich Agreement was shown to have been, not only a crime, but what was worse a blunder. It had destroyed a friendly nation, and had also immensely strengthened a potential enemy. There was a revolt in both France and England, not so much on principle but on practical grounds. The temporary relief obtained in September 1938 was seen to have landed both countries, and Europe itself, still deeper

The War

in the mire. Mr. Werth records a conversation between two Frenchmen in a cafe. '*Quel soulagement.*' '*Hm, oui, enfin . . . C'est le soulagement qu'on éprouve le moment où on a fait dans sa culotte.*'¹ The Englishman's growls were less witty, but in every public-house men were saying that Hitler had made fools of us, and that it would have to stop somewhere, in fact the sooner the better. The French knew that their security was seriously imperilled. The British could foresee an endless line of crises, occurring each month, and leading to a certain war at the end.

From one point of view 'Hitlerism' and 'Chamberlainism' collapsed together in the summer of 1939. Both had been dependent on avoiding war, both had raised entirely false hopes amongst their own people. The French and English had been taught to expect a gradual *soulagement*, and an era of peace, but by 1939 they saw only a frantic race for re-armament. The Germans and Italians looked for a series of bloodless victories, bringing profit as well as glory. Mussolini had already failed in this by the end of 1938. Neither Ethiopia nor Spain had been bloodless enterprises, and neither had been markedly profitable or glorious. His one subsequent adventure in 'Hitlerism' had been the capture of Albania, a little country already under Italian tutelage. His other demands for Tunis, Corsica and Nice, were obviously unobtainable except as the result of a German victory over France.

Hitler himself had succeeded brilliantly up till the summer of 1939. He had, in fact, done too well, his victories had been too easy either for his own mental balance or for that of his countrymen. The Führer seems to have been attacked by Hubris, that disease of insolent pride with which the gods afflict dictators in their hour of success. There was also intense pressure from within Germany for more cheap

¹ Alexander Werth, *France and Munich*.

Europe's Dance of Death

conquests. While 'Chamberlainism' was still a living force, and Mr. Chamberlain himself would probably have been willing to stage a 'better and brighter' Munich at the expense of Poland or Roumania, Hitler would not condescend either to wait or to co-operate. The personal factor became important. The little groups of men at the head of affairs in France and England began to revolt from the task which they had set themselves, and as they grew less complaisant the Nazis became more exigent.

There is little value in discussing the complicated negotiations which immediately preceded the invasion of Poland and the outbreak of war. The blue book, issued by the British Government, is chiefly interesting as an exposure of the 'business man's technique' applied to diplomacy.¹ Without a running commentary on the secret interviews and discussions the published documents are almost valueless. It would seem from documents 74 and 75 that another Munich was in the minds of both the French and British Governments till the last days of August, and there are signs that Mr. Chamberlain hoped, until the day war was declared, that he might repeat the device of bringing in Mussolini as the far from honest broker, and stage some kind of an agreement. (Document 143). But these documents are only stray leaves which may show which way the wind was blowing. Much of the language is incomprehensible. 'The Führer repeats that he is a man of *ad infinitum* decisions by which he himself is bound and that this is his last offer.' At one moment we might be back in Old Testament times, with the great King Darius bound by the laws of the Medes and the Persians, at another the atmosphere is that of the schoolroom, or of the Egyptian court

¹ Documents concerning German-Polish relations and the outbreak of hostilities between Great Britain and Germany on September 3, 1939. Cmd. 6106.

The War

in *Antony and Cleopatra* where the bearer of bad or unwelcome news was liable, if not to a whipping, at least to be bullied and stormed at by an angry little man.

In this undignified manner the two policies collapsed, but their failure did not lead to any change of personnel. Japan was the only country in which the Ministers allowed that they had been mistaken about foreign affairs, and resigned. The major European Powers, whether totalitarian or democratic, retained their old leaders after the war had begun. In France M. Bonnet was ousted from a position which he had failed to adorn, and in England, Mr. Churchill was brought into the Cabinet, but in no country was there any public recognition of failure. There were changes of policy when war began, but those who were responsible proceeded to dig themselves in with the feverish activity displayed by Germans on the Siegfried line. The Old Guard of the reactionaries surrenders but never dies.

I do not wish to discuss the course of a war which has developed along lines not expected by anyone. Those of us in England, who had foretold each stage of the collapse of appeasement, certainly thought the war would involve Italy, and possibly Spain, and would spread to the south-east of Europe. Ultimately this view may be right. At present Europe has, from the standpoint of power politics, returned to the early 'twenties and the plans of General von Seeckt for an understanding with Russia, the combined destruction of their common enemy Poland, and a more or less defensive war in the west. It is possible to regard the total defeat of Poland, without any effective assistance from the Entente, as the final disastrous result of the appeasement policy. The guarantee was so dishonest that it is impossible to acquit the Entente Powers of an intention of using it as a last bargaining counter. The plan failed. The Poles, with the horrid example of Czecho-Slovakia before their eyes,

Europe's Dance of Death

were not prepared to be absorbed piecemeal, and their Government, though corrupt, was less amenable to pressure than that of Beneš. There was also a revival of public opinion in France and England, which began to revolt against any more surrenders.

It is probable that the French were more directly interested in Poland than were the English. For centuries expatriated Poles had made Paris their centre, and had kept alive a traditional fondness for that unhappy country. France had, as it were, adopted the newly formed Polish nation. The English had much less feeling for Poland than for Czecho-Slovakia. They saw the former as an ill-managed dictatorship, which retained the worst feudal abuses in its eastern provinces, and included large numbers of Ukranians and Russians, whom it treated with real totalitarian barbarity. The five million Ukranians were 'pacified' in 1930 when Polish cavalry went through Eastern Galicia, flogging peasants and destroying their property in a manner which will not be forgotten for a century. It is, in fact, a country where civilization did not go very deep, and its government did not compare with that of Prague for humanity or for integrity.

The Englishman does not feel that he is fighting for Poland—certainly not for the restoration of all Poland's frontiers in the same way as the Allies felt about Belgium in the 1914 war. I suppose this war is unique in that the principal combatants on one side have no territorial ambitions for themselves. It has undoubtedly surprised the Germans to find two countries, which seemed so pacifist, entering a war with such apparent heartiness. The truth is that the English and French, unlike in so many ways, have a rather similar attitude towards war, and this attitude is exactly the opposite to that of the Germans. In many ways the Englishman is nearer to the German, but not in this all-

The War

important field, and so the Entente survives. Generalizations about countries are dangerous and seldom justifiable, but it is, I think, true to say that the Frenchman and the Englishman dislike discipline, think that war is a futile and beastly affair which it is a sin to justify, but they are secretly and half-ashamedly rather fond of fighting. The German frankly likes soldiering, is happy under discipline, and there is an old and evil tradition in Germany of glorifying war as an end in itself. His 'robust submissiveness' and his physical courage make him admirable material from which the officer caste can build up an army, which will neither grumble nor question the purposes for which it is being used. To an Englishman war is a vice, which is only supportable if taken in a spirit of good-humoured cynicism. He finds displays of patriotism as ridiculous as the German 'song of hate,' and is as keen to retain his individuality as the German is to be absorbed into the machine. As soon as a war begins the English and Germans cease to understand each other, and I suspect that it is partly because the Englishman is enjoying something which he knows he ought to dislike, while the German is possibly finding rather irksome what he knows he ought to enjoy.

One of the first British airmen to make a raid on Borkum was a former Oxford undergraduate. He carried as a mascot a white feather which had been presented to him by some dunder-headed colonel because he had, a year or two back, voted for the motion 'We will not fight for King and Country.' I have no doubt that he would still put up a sound justification for his vote, but Heaven forbid that I should try and explain that young man's point of view to a German.

The Frenchman, with his long tradition of compulsory military service and something of an officer caste, takes his soldiering more professionally and seriously. He does not

Europe's Dance of Death

find war quite as absurd as does the Englishman, and he applies his logical and disillusioned mind to it, with an enthusiasm which he seldom extends to politics. This accounts for the curious form which the war is taking. General Gamelin will fight his *guerre d'attente* at his own speed, with one object, to make it impossible for Germany to repeat this business. He will not risk an unnecessary casualty. The war may become even queerer, because three-dimensional warfare is still in its infancy. After centuries of creeping about on the ground and floating on the sea the human animal had learnt to defend himself extremely well on land, and fairly well at sea. Now the old struggle between weapons of defence and attack has begun again, but in three dimensions. The submarine has been tried out longer than the aeroplane, and its limits are becoming known. About the air we have everything to learn, partly because technical developments since 1918 have been so rapid. Ethiopia, Spain and Poland have shown us that two-dimensional armies are wholly ineffective against a force, well mechanised and armoured, which has also command of the air. The Finland war is being fought under such strange conditions, and we know so little about the equipment of the Russian troops, that it is too early to say whether this view may have to be modified.

From certain comments in foreign newspapers I gather that the effect of new armament developments has not been fully appreciated. It has immensely 'lengthened the odds' in favour of the Great Powers as against the lesser ones, and of any established Government against a rising of its people, which is not supported by the army. Goliath is far too well protected. David's pebble merely rattles harmlessly against his steel helmet. One unhappy result is to have fortified what I called the Great Power psychosis, and to increase the feeling of inferiority amongst the

The War

smaller countries. It has been horrible, during the last few months, to see old and well-established countries, like Sweden and Holland, driven to every kind of diplomatic shift, their statesmen virtually having to allow that they only survive on sufferance. Finland is perhaps the last David to stand up against Goliath, and it is possible that there are enough chinks in the armour of this uncouth savage for some lucky pebble to take effect. Finland is fighting more simply and directly for freedom than either France or England, and as I write the issue is still in doubt.

I am afraid that I have wandered far from the original object of this book, which was to show why the two principles of freedom and democracy had failed to prevent a catastrophe in Europe. An impartial reader in some neutral country may say that, with Hitlerism on one side and Chamberlainism on the other, we are all getting what we deserve. I should be sorry if an attempt to be strictly truthful should encourage this attitude. I believe it would be a colossal tragedy if world opinion, as far as it still exists, were to condemn both belligerents equally, murmuring 'a plague o' both your houses.'

I have travelled enough about the world to be acutely conscious of the special difficulties which beset an Englishman when he begins to discuss foreign affairs with people in other countries. It soon becomes clear why England cannot easily take a lead, even if her statesmen and her Foreign Office wished to do so. We have trodden heavily on a good many corns, and we have a marvellous faculty for dismissing from our minds certain unhappy and indefensible incidents in our history. Such incidents are often the major events in the history of a smaller Power or some group of people anxious for their freedom. The present struggle is not an imperialist war, but it will be very hard for the two old imperial Powers, England and

Europe's Dance of Death

France, to prove their disinterestedness. Great Britain has to face the continual opposition and criticism of a race which cherishes old grievances until they become an obsession.

Most Englishmen of my generation do not take the ancient wrongs of Ireland with any great seriousness. Are we really responsible for our great-great-grandparents? Personally I cannot feel more than an academic interest in what Cromwell did in Ireland. I may have had some thirty ancestors living at the time. They would have been mostly small farmers and their wives. Some four or five would have been Irish, living in Ireland. Have I got to start a civil war inside myself, or garb myself in sackcloth and ashes because some of my forebears were Cromwell's fellow-countrymen? For all I know they may have been keen royalists.

In the last twenty-five years we have supped our fill of horrors. We have taken part in a war on a scale which made most previous struggles seem paltry. We have watched Europe reverting to barbarism which it would be an insult to the middle ages to call 'mediaeval.' I utterly refuse to have the same kind of concern about Drogheda, three centuries ago, as for the appalling tragedy of Lublin, the latest manifestation of German anti-semitism. Not only is the latter an outrage on humanity far more deliberate, far more systematic, and on a much larger scale, but these are persecuted people for whom one can or at least could do something. There is an old gypsy saying—'One cannot live with the dead.' It is more true to-day than ever before.

As a young man and a liberal I was a keen supporter of Irish Home Rule. The Irish problem is one of the many unhappy legacies of our hereditary reactionaries, but now Eire seems to most of us an entirely foreign country, which, for a small state in modern Europe, is extremely happily

The War

situated. Southern Ireland must be almost the only Continental area which is not mobilized, and is not spending her energy on arming. She is also enjoying a satisfactory revenge for all her wrongs, real and imaginary. On the whole the British public and press has behaved with considerable restraint about Ireland. I find amongst working men a growing feeling against the young Irishmen who come over to England from a country which is officially neutral, but actually is extremely helpful to Germany. The Embassy at Dublin is a centre of espionage, and a clearing house for information about shipping, weather conditions, etc., in the Atlantic. There is considerable evidence that U-boats receive the same kind of assistance from individuals in west Ireland that they did from Spain from 1916 onwards. Irishmen, including Mr. Bernard Shaw, can live in England as Englishmen, and blackguard the country as Irishmen. We are frankly getting very weary of them, and their condonation of the men who, pretending to be 'at war,' leave bombs in railway stations and letter-boxes.

Perhaps the world is also getting a little tired of Irish grievances. I imagine that the British Empire, apart from the Dominions, presents a more formidable obstacle to an understanding between England and 'men of good will' in the rest of the world. Our treatment of India is probably the crux of the matter. In this question my own position is rather unusual. I have been considerably more anti-imperialist than most Englishmen, and sufficiently critical of the Government of India to be considered as a 'subversive' person. When I was in India during the late 'twenties I had the doubtful honour of being followed round by a member of the Criminal Investigation Department. A little later I was political secretary for the Labour Party at the Indian Round Table Conference. One way and

Europe's Dance of Death

another I have met most of the leading Indian politicians, and have a fairly varied knowledge of the country. My experience includes four years with the Indian army, some years as a Government official, and two years 'welfare work' amongst Indian factory hands in Bengal. I have always been a keen advocate for a different form of constitution, but all hopes of obtaining it were killed when the Labour Party was pushed out of office in 1931.

The English hatred of planning ahead, their insistence on 'taking their jumps when they come to them,' has ruined any chance of a really happy ending to the period of British Rule in India. On the other hand there is a certain 'time-lag' about the foreign view of our position in India. I used to write a good deal about Indian problems, and had to read most of what was written on the subject. While you have to go outside England to find the best authority on many Indian historical and religious questions, I do not think the world is well informed about modern developments. Newspapers, in their anxiety to avoid imperialist propaganda, are sometimes extremely uncritical about what are really attacks on the Government. This is especially true of America.

I remember meeting at Karachi the correspondent of a leading American newspaper. It was at the time of the Indian Congress meeting, soon after the Irwin-Gandhi pact. In an expansive moment after dinner he told me what had been his editor's last words: 'Now mind the British don't pull the wool over your eyes, with all their propaganda. What we want is straight anti-British stuff, with a sob-story about that little fellow Gandhi for the Sunday edition.' Certainly the propaganda has not been all on one side. For years an Indian lectured in America, and by multiplying the figures for wheat exports by a hundred supported his contention that the English were fed from starving

The War

India. Actually India, without Burma, is a food-importing country, and has been for some years.

It may be that I am growing older, it may be that the last few years have altered all our views, but I have very much less definite ideas about India than I had in the 'twenties. It might have been better for the British to have handed over the Government, lock, stock and barrel, to a 'democratic' Indian Assembly, but I am not sure that the process of slowly fading out has been altogether unsuccessful. It has kept four hundred million human beings at peace in a very rampagious world, and it is not much of a compliment to them to talk as if they were forcibly held down by rather over four hundred civil servants, and some fifty thousand soldiers, most of whom are stationed near the frontier. If the war continues for some time the 'Indianizing' of the services and the army officers will go on apace, until at the end there will be little left to quarrel about except the bare husk of a dead organism. In the meantime, in the Central Assembly and still more in the Provincial Councils, elected Indians are exercising nearly all the ordinary functions of Government. In one Province they have introduced Prohibition, in another compulsory education. These represent the growing organisms, and though I should not have agreed, even five years ago, I am not certain that it may not be best to let them develop under the present system, at any rate until Germany is defeated.

It would have been an admirable gesture to have granted some form of dominion status to India, and could have been done without altering fundamentally the natural development of self-government. There are real difficulties in the way of a too rapid withdrawal of control. The Moslem question is not just an excuse—on that point world opinion has accepted too readily the Congress

Europe's Dance of Death

point of view. The Princes are also a problem which could have been solved in the peaceful 'twenties, but is considerably more formidable in these days when the world has learnt how effective is the threat of forcible resistance.

Unfortunately the English Conservatives will never understand or sympathise with the interest which other people take in 'status.' Being very confident about their own position in the world, they always under-estimate what is one of the great motive forces in modern politics. Nor will Conservatives ever give way to mild pressure, though they will collapse suddenly when they are seriously frightened, either by untoward events abroad or by some real change in public sentiment at home. A war is a great opportunity for clearing up old scandals and removing old grievances—anything which can be dealt with by legislation or by Government enterprise—but a war may also be an excuse for delay. Already the Government has used this excuse in order to defer any action in India. Not only India is a sufferer. We are also losing a marvellous opportunity for clearing up our own slums. The evacuation of London and other city children has proved an unpleasant revelation to thousands of middle-class Englishmen, who have learnt for the first time 'how the poor live.' Instead of using this feeling, and pushing on with new housing schemes, which are themselves a form of evacuation, the Government has stopped all the local bodies from further activities.

This brings us to the main point. The Government and the ruling class, both in France and England, present the real bar to neutral sympathy with the Entente cause. Neutral opinion could, I feel, agree to let the dead bury their dead, and forget about the delinquencies of our grandfathers, or even of our fathers. What, however, can we say about the working of democracy since 1918? Both England and

The War

France have been governed by small groups of men, who when faced by a difficult challenge—the rise of aggression in Japan, Italy and Germany—proceeded to carry on a series of unworthy intrigues, and sacrifice numbers of decent people. It is true that the sins of the ‘pluto-democracies’ have been passive rather than active, but I have endeavoured to give an honest account of the last three or four years, and in view of this record it seems clear that I could not suggest co-operation with the Governments unless there was a change both of outlook and personnel. Of this there is no sign. It is possible that the small ruling class in both countries may lose their influence if the war goes on for a long time, and becomes more severe in character. At present the tendency is for them to increase their hold.

There are several reasons why the war should have placed Mr. Chamberlain more firmly in power. The alignment of the Powers at the outbreak afforded, superficially, some justification for the ‘appeasement policy,’ at least with regard to Italy. The real nature of the help and encouragement given to Mussolini is not known in England, where few people attempt to analyse the complicated sequence of events since 1935. The opposition parties had pressed rather too hard for a Russian agreement, and a small but extremely vocal section had insisted that the Soviets’ good record with regard to foreign affairs was due to innate virtues and not to policy. The ordinary Englishman, finding himself at war, and much taken up with military or civil duties, with ration cards and ‘black-outs,’ is not disposed to be very critical. He notes that Italy and Spain have kept out of the war, and that Russia is behaving extremely badly. He gives a good mark to the Prime Minister, and scores up a bad one to the Labour and Liberal Parties. The French, more logical and more

Europe's Dance of Death

knowledgeable, never considered the 'appeasement policy' as anything than an attempt to gain time for re-armament, and they regard a *guerre d'attente*, with its small casualties and its single well-protected front as a diplomatic triumph.

Some English Conservatives, like Mr. Harold Nicolson, seem to think that the big financial interests have voluntarily immolated themselves on their country's altar, by agreeing to a war. We are asked to admire their patriotism and self-sacrifice. I am afraid that I cannot accept this view. The very rich are being heavily taxed, but on their income only, and it is easy and dignified to retrench in war-time. They will remain as powerful, relatively, after the war as before. Their natural leaders are still in office, and the acceptance of a political truce by the Opposition will prevent any serious attempt to displace them. So effective have they been in entrenching themselves in the key positions, and finding posts for their relations that we are already talking of the 'war of somebody's cousin.' The military machine is working very slowly, and for the middle-aged it requires as much influence to get into this war as it did to keep out of the last. In a few cases the same individuals have done both.

I am, however, writing after some four months of a war which is extremely slow in starting. As one diplomatist remarked, the game has not yet begun, we have not even cut for partners. It is too early to talk about the social effects of a struggle which may develop in a hundred different ways. The 1914 war started with a great military fight, but once Von Kluck's first dash through had been held up the war slowed down, and it was a long time before it took its final shape. Italy did not decide to leave the Triple Alliance and join France and England till nine months after the outbreak, and other countries came in later.

The World and the War

In these days everyone, outside and inside the belligerent countries, must consider what attitude to adopt towards war. It is possible to consider war as a disease, and all engaged in it as infected persons. I remember returning from the East with an educated and wealthy young Chinese. He took this view, and was seriously perturbed when some Italian soldiers were embarked from Massawa. They had been taking part in the Ethiopian war. To some extent I shared his dislike—not because the men had been fighting, but because they had been fighting in what I considered to be a bad cause. It is easy for anyone in a neutral country to take an extreme view, like that of the Chinese, but it is dangerous because it is based on a false analogy. A keen and critical interest in the causes of each outbreak is essential to health, or even to salvation, in the present world. To be critical you need certain standards.

First of all I think it is necessary to differentiate between peoples and their Governments. Sometimes both may seem admirable. I imagine that the general enthusiasm for Finland is based partly on respect for an independent Government, which has led this young country wisely and correctly, but still more is it due to our admiration and sympathy for a gallant people, living in that barren northern land, who have so successfully cultivated both their minds and their bodies. Every writer must have a warm feeling for a small city like Helsinki, which contains one of the

Europe's Dance of Death

finest book-shops in the world. Every athlete knows Finland's great record. It is good that world opinion should have been so clearly expressed in regard to this war. The expression may not affect Russia, but to those of us who are floundering in the confusion of a European war it is something to know that the world seems to have passed an almost unanimous verdict on one issue.

We cannot expect the same agreement about the major war. No honest advocate can exculpate any of the Governments involved, but I feel that the peoples should be tried separately from their rulers. It is only partly true that countries get the Governments they deserve. So far none of the larger European Powers, and very few of the smaller ones, have evolved a satisfactory method of ordering their public affairs. I have tried to suggest some of the ways in which democracy has failed in England, France and Germany. In most countries, and this is obviously true of the United States also, we find great indifference about the type of individual who comes to the front, especially in municipal governments. Sometimes it would seem as if democracy cannot function properly in countries with a population of more than about four millions. One reason why democracy has worked badly of late has been the growing complication of all political issues, especially of relations with other countries. We cannot expect more from a people than that they should insist upon certain standards inside their own country, and object, even if belatedly, to what is done in their name abroad if it is too blatantly immoral. I do not think that they can be blamed severely for acquiescence in complicated foreign and colonial policies, the true nature of which is kept from them.

The views which I have endeavoured to express in this book are certainly not widely accepted in England, and would probably be considered perverse by most

The World and the War

Frenchmen. I happen to have seen 'appeasement' from behind the scenes, in Abyssinia, Spain and Czecho-Slovakia. Why should I blame the lads in the gallery, or the old ladies in the 'pit,' if they are taken in? Perhaps some of them were too ready to accept the spurious, came to the theatre determined to be satisfied, or allowed their critical sense to be overpowered by their prejudices. We had our isolationists who cheered the apparently adroit way in which Mr. Chamberlain evaded his foreign commitments. We had our extreme pacifists who were delighted when, at the end of the fourth act, England was still at peace. There was sufficient applause from different parts of the house for the ordinary spectator to assume that he was seeing a fairly good show.

There were, of course, plenty of cat-calls and hisses at the presentation, but a remarkable appearance of unanimity can be obtained when a handful of supporters control most of the Press. The only real limitations on the rulers of a pluto-democracy are the need for keeping the confidence of their influential supporters, and the avoidance of any sudden mass revulsion of feeling. The two most notable retreats from 'appeasement'—the dropping of the Hoare-Laval Plan and the guarantee to Poland—were both due to revolts inside the Conservative Party as much as to any popular movement. Here the pluto-democratic statesman is at a disadvantage. The tougher dictator merely removes those who oppose him inside his party. Hitler has got rid of Röhm, Heines, Ernst and a host of less well-known Nazis. Stalin rarely passes a year without a thorough purge amongst the higher circles of Communism.

Democracy and freedom of criticism have still great influence in France and Great Britain, even if they operated least effectively in foreign affairs. If we go back to the three fundamentals to which I referred in the fourth chapter

Europe's Dance of Death

of this book, it will be seen that they refer mostly to what people permit their Governments to do at home.

1. The Rule of Law. Apart from a certain bias—practical rather than theoretical—in favour of the rich, the law courts operate fairly enough in England and democracies. The French have taken fuller extra-legal powers than the British. Both countries contained many enemy aliens, mostly but not entirely refugees. The sorting out of these by judicial authorities was done quickly and humanely. Only about one per cent of the Germans in England have been interned. A few of the Irish 'Republicans' have been interned in Ulster, and some have been expelled from England, but it is not easy to know how to deal with men who declare themselves active enemies of your country, and yet insist on remaining in it.

In Germany the rule of law has collapsed altogether. No one would pretend that anyone who, for racial or political reasons, is inimical to the Government has even the outward pretence of a fair trial. Neither his person nor his property are safeguarded. The position in Russia is the subject of some controversy. Personally I do not believe that any court can function properly in countries where there are police bodies so powerful and arbitrary as the Gestapo and the OGPU. In Germany the Nazis have deliberately done away with what they call 'Roman Law' as being too 'materialistic,' but Hitler has not yet rivalled his great exemplar in producing a new Code Napoléon.

2. Freedom of thought and discussion. Although a war-time censorship has been applied to communications abroad, there has been little interference with criticism and discussion at home in England. The French Government has taken fairly drastic action against the Communist Party, but they had to deal with individuals who quite openly took their orders from the leaders of a foreign

The World and the War

Power. The contrast here with Germany is very clearly marked. The young Germans have been taught to look upon freedom as a mark of decadence. The change is remarkable, because there was much talk of Germany's lost *Freiheit* in connection with the campaign against the Treaty of Versailles. Now the Storm Troopers like to parade the streets chanting, *Wir Scheissen auf die Freiheit*, a Nazi crudity which I need not translate.

3. The right to existence of individuals and small nations. I do not think that any of the Western democracies would have ever have tolerated within their own borders the kind of racial bullying which has been going on all over Germany and eastern Europe during the last decade. In every country cruelty, like the cruder forms of vice, will lurk in dark places, or may suddenly grip an excited crowd. At no time in European history has it been exalted into a national virtue as in modern Germany. There we find a combination of sadism with a view of the State which destroys all idea of individual dignity and self-respect.

We are on much more debatable ground when we consider the bullying of countries and peoples abroad rather than of individuals at home. Hardly anyone in Europe has a clean sheet in this respect. I have the greatest respect for the virtues of the Dutch, but should not care to defend all their past activities in the East Indies. The Belgians are an admirable race, but they acquiesced in the Congo 'red rubber' atrocities. England and France have long scores written up against their names. The most that can be said for nineteenth-century imperialism is that our fathers really did believe they were opening up 'dark continents.' Not all imperialism is mere exploitation. Good colonial administration, like one's digestion, is usually forgotten until it goes wrong. I believe that the

Europe's Dance of Death

great majority of people in France and England would be ready for a revision of the whole colonial system, and the establishment of an effective mandatory control over the backward areas, but I cannot answer for their Governments, and it could only become a political issue in a period of peace.

The ultimate test to be applied should be the readiness to use war as a means of aggression. The unforgivable political sin is to treat war as if it was the normal and healthy outlet for the energies of the people. We have now in Europe at least a hundred million grown men and women who have been taught by dictators that a country has the right to expand at the expense of any other country which refuses to fight, or is prepared to accept insults. The mere removal of a Hitler or the death of a Mussolini will not cure the evil which these two men have spread.

The menace cannot be met by acquiescence. For that reason the extreme pacifist constitutes a danger as great as the drawing-room Fascist. 'Chamberlainism' would never have been possible but for the support which it has received from men like Lord Londonderry on one side and men like Mr. Lansbury on the other. Foreign policy has always been rather like a game of poker. The threat of war is an easy and tempting form of bluff. If some of the players pledge themselves never, under any circumstances, to 'call' the bluff they are presenting the game to any leader who strikes a bellicose attitude, even if his resources are quite second-rate. The Italians are not a really war-like people, but they were extremely successful at appearing to be so until they ran up against a tougher player with a far more effective backing.

It is probable that the most elementary standards of decent behaviour will disappear over large parts of Europe. In every belligerent country, and amongst the threatened

The World and the War

neutrals, there will be a tendency to restrict all freedom of thought and discussion. We may have to look to America to know what is really happening in the world. We shall expect American Universities to keep alive the tradition of recording impartial history, and American scientists and philosophers to continue research and speculation according to the old non-national tradition. In some cases Europeans, unable to protect themselves, will have to deposit their ideas and aspirations across the Atlantic for safe keeping. Czech freedom will live on in Chicago. The intimate study of psychology, which centred round Vienna, will develop amongst new surroundings in other countries. Countries not directly threatened by war can thus perform a great service, but it is equally essential that in Europe itself those who lead public opinion should retain the ideals of freedom in their own minds even if they are forced to acquiesce in their temporary disappearance.

One most important freedom is the right to worship God in one's own way. It is very unfortunate that the most powerful Christian organization has not been content with the tolerance shown to its religion in the democratic countries. I believe that to-day the Catholic Church is more prosperous and makes more converts in the United States than in any other country. It is free and politically powerful in France and England. Yet for some years the general tendency of the Vatican has been anti-democratic and in many democratic countries, notably France and Canada, the leaders of the Church have been closely connected with Fascist movements. This threat from within may ultimately prove almost as destructive to European civilization and the old democratic standards as war itself, for it will destroy the will to recover freedom after the war.

It was, perhaps, natural that the Church, authoritarian in respect to its own members, should sympathize with

Europe's Dance of Death

those who applied the same principles in everyday politics. The situation of the Vatican and the preponderance of Italians in the Catholic hierarchy have also contributed to a close understanding with Mussolini. It found expression in the Concordat of 1929, and since then in a bias towards Fascism which appears to have been renewed since the outbreak of war. Yet if we look at Europe the Church has suffered much at the hands of dictators, in Poland, in Austria, and in Germany itself. It is true that clericalism has been forced once more upon Spain by Italian bayonets and German bombers, but such a victory will not counter-balance what has been lost. It would have been far better for Christianity if the historic connection between democracy and tolerance had been recognized. The threat to religion, inherent in the totalitarian state, comes not only from the dictator's unwillingness to brook a rival power within their realm, but in the tendency to turn the dictator himself into a kind of tribal god.

The alliance between Italy and the Vatican, combined with the victory of General Franco in Spain, have led to much talk of a 'Christian Front.' The object would be to relieve these two Mediterranean dictators from the embarrassing position in which they have placed themselves by accepting a German alliance and German help. Knowing that their former friends were still powerful in England they probably hoped that they might get the Allies to make peace with Hitler, and start an anti-Communist war. It is, I think, unlikely that this will happen, although there are influential members of the Fifth Column still working for it in France and England. The Germans are too truculent and optimistic, the French—and to a less extent the English—are too determined that they are not going to have another western European war when this one is finished. The Mediterranean Powers and the Vatican have,

The World and the War

however, helped to kill any idea that this is a war fought for any principles. The need for propitiating them has prevented any general statement of war aims. We are clearly not fighting against aggression nor for the restoration of small Powers—Abyssinia and Albania are too recent memories and both conquests have been recognized. We are not fighting for democracy against totalitarianism—we guaranteed Poland but not Czecho-Slovakia. It may be noted that after four months of the war Mr. Chamberlain prefers to talk about making a 'Christian' peace, and fighting against the 'spirit of Hitlerism.' Because 'appeasement' was, at the best, a merely opportunist policy, both France and England cannot, as Governments, take any moral leadership. The war is a dog-fight, and no one knows into what shifts and compromises the Allies may be forced in their struggle for existence. We may find that we are already committed to some agreement, similar to that Treaty of London in 1915 which brought Italy into the earlier war. Unless Germany collapses internally, the war is almost certain to spread, and it is most unlikely that the Powers grouped with the Entente will have much in common except a desire to win, and a dislike for Communism and Nazism.

For this and other reasons it does not seem likely that there will be much building for the future until the war and the first peace settlement have been completed. There comes a time when a wise man no longer attempts to prop up a falling wall. He lets it fall and then begins to rebuild. We should therefore deprecate premature talk about the Entente as the basis of a new federation 'open to the whole world,' as Mr. Chamberlain and M. Daladier have suggested. The first necessity is to win the war, and to establish some new equilibrium. This is likely to be a long and difficult task. A number of suppressed and outraged peoples, victims

Europe's Dance of Death

of Nazi and Soviet oppression—Poles, Czechs, Jews, etc.—will be struggling either for freedom or revenge. In the earlier chapters of this book I have reminded readers of those almost forgotten years immediately following 1918. If the present struggle lasts for some years we cannot expect to avoid a similar series of little wars and revolutions. As these subside there may be a chance for some kind of federation, and it is good that the possibilities and difficulties should be discussed. Our generation should enjoy one advantage over our predecessors. We can learn something from the mistakes of the last settlement.

The failure of President Wilson was not just the case of an honest man being hoodwinked by cunning diplomats. The procedure was wrong. Most people now recognize that there should have been a far simpler and less drastic dictated peace, to be followed after a decent interval by a series of negotiated treaties. Much of the Treaty of Versailles was sound enough. I have never been a party to the deliberate propaganda, inspired by Germany and aimed against the frontiers or against the existence of such States as Czecho-Slovakia. On the other hand some of the Treaty was confused and ineffective, the product of men with totally different ideas about the need and practicability of avoiding another war with Germany. In the end the result was to cause the maximum of ill-feeling and provide the minimum of security. Most Englishmen thought France was being unreasonable during the years immediately following the war, but to-day Foch's demand for the Rhine frontier does not seem so extravagant. On the other hand no one can defend the parts of the Treaty which deal with reparations and armaments. These were essentially subjects to be reconsidered as part of a later negotiated treaty.

The other great failure was the League of Nations as a basis for collective security. The conception was too

The World and the War

academic and too pretentious. There is a type of mind which considers that a letter to the Press gains in importance by the number of its signatories. Experience has shown that this is not true, and it is equally certain that a League does not gain by the addition of numerous little countries which are likely to cause difficulties without adding to its authority. The only effective force behind a League of Sovereign States comes from the armaments of certain Great Powers. If, as actually occurred, certain other Great Powers either remain outside or join without any intention of being loyal to the League, then you are almost bound to get a recurrence of the unhappy events which have marked the last ten years. While Germany, Italy and Japan returned to the old game of *machtpolitik* the Entente Powers had no wish for *their* policy and actions to be defined by groups of small nations which would not be able to render any great help, either in armaments or from their strategic position. Even if we hold that England and France adopted an unwise policy and justified it dishonestly, yet the fundamental difficulty remains. Unfortunately the development of scientific armaments has increased the relative weakness of the small, and especially of the non-industrial, countries.

There will always be work for a League of Nations, such work as has been done by the International Labour Office, but I cannot imagine any circumstances which would enable a future peace to be built up on this foundation. A short indecisive war would leave Europe an armed camp, with most of the Continental armies outside the League. If the war should go on for some years it will probably end in one side cracking internally. It is possible but most unlikely that the combatants will fight themselves to a standstill, and allow a benevolent America to settle their affairs. We must presume that the first peace will be dictated

Europe's Dance of Death

by the victors and imposed by their armies. A German victory, with or without Russian or Italian help, would probably mean that England and France would become semi-independent countries shorn of their empires, or would succumb to revolutionary movements aided by Germany. In any case the whole conceptions which lie behind the League would be dead. A victory for the Entente, with or without the help of other allies, would afford the possibility of a federation capable of establishing peace over the civilized world.

Before the outbreak of war considerable interest was aroused by proposals for a 'democratic federation.' The best case for this was put forward by an American writer, Mr. Clarence K. Streit. Like all Americans he underestimated the difficulty of persuading independent states to give up part of their sovereignty. He envisaged some fifteen 'founder' democracies: The United States, Great Britain and her five Dominions, France, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland. The five main functions of the Union would be:—

1. The right to grant citizenship.
2. The right to make peace and war, negotiate treaties and raise a defence force.
3. The right to regulate inter-state and foreign trade.
4. The right to coin and issue money.
5. The right to govern inter-state communication services.

It is hardly politically conceivable that such a formal union could ever be started as the result of ordinary peacetime negotiations. The proposal smacks of the amateur constitution-maker. It would, however, seem that the war and the aggressive activities of the totalitarian states may develop a federation by the more natural and healthy process

The World and the War

of states joining together in self-protection. It has been made painfully clear that the sovereignty of small states is no longer very valuable. Also the two Entente Powers have already pooled their resources and curtailed their freedom of action in a manner which would have surprised the statesmen who were in office during the last war. Several of the states mentioned by Mr. Streit may or may not remain neutral during the coming years, but they will certainly emerge from the war with more modest ideas about their ability to continue as independent sovereign Powers. They have watched their neighbours being destroyed, or else being forced, like the Baltic states, to accept humiliating restrictions.

The arrangements between England and France are for the duration of the war and six months afterwards. If a federation is to be formed with this alliance as the nucleus the peoples of the two countries will have to be educated up to the idea during the war itself. So far there are few signs of this being done. Mr. Chamberlain has talked vaguely about an Anglo-French federation which will be open to all the world to join—a typically unhappy example of loose thinking and speaking. On the other hand groups of advanced thinkers, without any popular support, have been tackling the subject with that academic optimism which kills so many good causes.

I have tried, in this book, to trace certain weaknesses and also some sinister influences which have led Europe into war. Some of these are likely to survive a war in which the Entente Powers are victorious, and they would tend to destroy any hopes of an effective federation. The two nucleus Powers will probably remain 'pluto-democracies.' They will retain huge empires, in which the bulk of the inhabitants are not self-governing. The 'City' and the 'Two Hundred Families' will still have their financial

Europe's Dance of Death

interests scattered all over the world, and are not likely to lose their voice in public affairs. It is easy to see some of the problems which will arise.

It will be difficult for either France or England to differentiate between democracies and totalitarian countries, or to insist upon certain standards of individual freedom. Influential groups in each Entente country will retain their old preferences for Fascist Italy and phalangist Spain. Many wealthy Englishmen have already transferred large sums to the latter country. The effect of federation, or merely of the pooling of resources and armaments, would be to stabilize the existing form of Governments, and it would make any democratic revolt impossible. If federation is to have any lasting effect it must be based on some type of government, and certainly the United States would not give up any of her sovereignty and freedom of action in order to join a mixed group of dictators and pseudo-democracies and help to keep Spain and Italy under their present rulers.

The British Empire, as apart from the self-governing Dominions, and the French, Dutch and Belgian colonies are treated by Mr. Streit as property which can be pooled in the same way as the American gold reserve. Like most Americans he assumes that such measures of self-government as have been granted to India, Ceylon, Algeria and Syria are just 'eye-wash,' and in his draft plan for a Union legislature he does not give these countries any representation, although their combined populations far exceed those of all the fifteen 'founder states.' India, with some four hundred million inhabitants, its legislatures and its representatives on the League of Nations, can hardly be thrown into the hotch-potch of colonies together with the French Cameroons, the Belgian Congo, and the Sandwich Islands. Decades of confused thinking, of dishonest compromises

The World and the War

and opportunism, have left the European democracies with huge colonial appendages which will not fit into any logical system. It would be as hard to exclude India as to include her on any basis of equal citizenship. If the federation was confined to Europe and North America it would keep out Australia and New Zealand, in which the elements of freedom and democratic thought are so strong.

Both the League and the British Empire have been ineffective as instruments of civilization and peace because membership has not been sufficiently prized. There has always been more talk of leaving than of joining either institution. German refugees are about the only people who have ever paid to become British citizens. Ethiopia is almost the only country which really considered it an honour to be elected to the League. Many parts of the British Empire, notably India and Ireland, would welcome a federation chiefly as a means of putting pressure on the British Government.

Much will depend on the relations between America and the Entente Powers. England and France have so many enemies, so much to live down, that they can never found any organization which will be 'exclusive' in the best sense. The Roman Empire did manage to achieve this. The freedom of Rome was something to boast about. "The chief captain answered, 'With a great sum obtained I this freedom.' And Paul said, 'But I was free born.' " The United States must hold, as it were, a high place amongst the list of directors, together with some of those smaller neutrals which have preserved their traditions.

Other difficulties are bound to arise, during and still more after the war. France will demand physical guarantees against a further war, and these may be of a nature which will offend people who do not know what it is to have potential enemies on the other side of land frontiers. The

Europe's Dance of Death

British imperial and colonial policy is bound to be suspect, especially under our present rulers. There are as yet no signs of a change of heart amongst the latter. I do, however, believe that this may develop into a real 'people's war,' in which the French and English will be actuated solely by a determination never to let this sort of thing happen again. *Il faut en finir*. There is a complete absence of jingoism, and no illusions about the difficulties which will follow the war. If England breaks, it will be from the top, another failure of the small class which has got us into this trouble, and which still holds so much authority. The danger, both now and after the war, will come from our old besetting sins, our snobbishness and our mental laziness.

*The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to scourge us.*

We shall be well scourged, though some of the backs which most deserve it may escape a drubbing. We ought, however, to emerge from the war more admirable in many ways. Conscription and the evacuation of children have taught us more about each other in a few months than we had learnt in previous decades. As the war goes on the decent solid virtues of the English should prevail. We have been likened to a glass of beer. The world has seen too much of the froth, and heard too much about the dregs. We and the French can help to provide what is most needed to-day—a kindly tolerance towards others, and a respect for the dignity and independence of the individual. We are threatened by a danger far worse than Napoleonism. In that era thrones and Governments were toppled over, but the human mind remained extraordinarily free. The modern dictator will destroy both body and soul. It is from this evil that those who understand the old traditions of European civilization, both in Europe and America, will have to save the world.

INDEX

(N.B.—No references are given to the Principal Powers, to Herr Hitler or Signor Mussolini, as the entries would be too numerous to make the list useful.)

- Abdul Hamid, Sultan, 38, 83
- Abyssinia, *see* Ethiopia
- Action Française*, 165
- Addis Ababa, 220, 228, 232
- Adowa, battle of, 68, 248
- Agadir, 65–6
- Albania, 224, 289, 297, 319
- Alexander II, 25
- Algeciras Conference, 64–5, 68, 214
- Amritsar, 100–1
- Anschluss*, Austrian, 216, 232, 257–65, 270
- Archer-Shee Case, 25
- Astor, J. J., 126
- Astor, Hon. J. J., 127–8
- Astor, Lady, 127, 270
- Astor, Lord, 127
- Astor, W. W., 126–7
- Asquith, H. H. (Lord), 24, 85
- Austria, 34–5, 42, 49, 73, 82–3, 100, 141, 219, 257 ff.
- Azaña, Señor, 242

- Bacon, Francis, 25
- Bagehot, Walter, 114, 278
- Baghdad Railway, 73–7
- Baldwin, Lord, 165, 195, 221–3, 242
- Balfour, Lord, 52
- Balkan League, 51
- Ballin, Herr, 38, 188
- Baratieri, General, 218
- Bari wireless, 248, 288
- Barrera, General, 238
- Bauer, Gustav, 173, 176, 179
- Bela Kun, 97

- Belgian Congo, 28, 66, 324
- Beneš, Dr. Edouard, 268, 273–5, 281–2, 300
- Berlin, Treaty of (1878), 49–51, 279
- Bernhardi, General von, 45, 175, 209
- Bethmann-Hollweg, Theobald von, 79
- Bismarck, Prince, 35–6, 44, 46, 58, 61, 71, 243, 279, 284
- Blücher, General, 53
- Blum, M. Leon, 165–6, 231–2, 244
- Blunt, W. Scawen, 27
- Bodley, J. E. C., 151
- Boer War, 28–9, 42, 51, 57–60
- Boncour, Paul, 165
- Bonnet, M., 280, 299
- Boulanger, General, 84, 145, 148
- Boy-Ed, Captain, 198
- Bradlaugh, C., 114
- Briand, Aristide, 151, 154–5, 157, 161–4, 205
- Brooke, Rupert, 16
- Brown, Mr. Ernest, 137
- Brüning, B. Heinrich, 18, 193–202
- Bulgaria, 50–1
- Bülow, Prince von, 58, 64–6, 71–2, 75, 78
- Burgin, Mr. L., 135
- Burns, Mr. John, 85, 117
- Butler, Mr. R. A., 126

- Caillaux, M., 66, 84, 155
- Campbell-Bannerman, Sir H., 28, 58, 76
- Calmette, M., 84

Europe's Dance of Death

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p> Caporetto, battle of, 218, 248
 Caprivi, Count, 71
 Carnot, President, 146
 Carson, Lord, 86
 Casimir-Périer, M. J., 146, 150
 Cavaignac, Godefroy, 150
 Cecil, Lord Robert, 138, 232-3
 Chamberlain, Sir Austen, 136, 161-2, 190, 205-6
 Chamberlain, Houston Stewart, 41, 266
 Chamberlain, Joseph, 29, 38, 58, 60, 116-17, 123
 Chamberlain, Mr. Neville, 12, 29, 129, 136, 212, 226, 228, 231, 239, 254, 270-9, 283-5, 294-8, 309, 323
 Chéron, M., 162
 Chiappe, M., 167
 China, 56-7
 Churchill, Randolph, 113, 115
 Churchill, Mr. Winston, 85, 137-8, 279, 299
 Clemenceau, Georges, 151, 154-7
 Colson, R., 219
 <i>Comité des Forges</i>, 159, 294
 Cooper, Mr. Duff, 138, 279
 Corfu, 207-8, 279
 Coward, Mr. Noel, 104
 Cranborne, Lord, 260
 Crimean War, 35, 42, 49
 <i>Croix de Feu</i>, 167-9
 Cuno, Herr, 179-80
 Czecho-Slovakia, 12, 44, 89, 106, 141, 219, 232, 262-85, 296, 299, 320

 D'Abernon, Lord, 162, 243
 <i>Daily Telegraph</i>, 79
 Daladier, M. 115-16, 165-7, 274, 278, 319
 Damascus, 101
 Daniels, Mr. H. G., 181
 D'Annunzio, Gabriele, 97 </p> | <p> Danzig, 285, 290
 De Bono, General, 218
 De La Rocque, Colonel, 145, 167-9, 231
 De La Warr, Earl, 137, 276
 Delcassé, M., 61-4
 D'Enghien, Duc de, 26-7
 Denmark, 44-5, 49, 81, 322
 Deschanel, President, 146
 De Staël, Madame, 71
 De Wendel, M., 159
 Disraeli, Benjamin, 115, 135, 279
 Djavid Bey, 74
 Dollfuss, Engelbert, 202, 254, 259
 Doumer, President, 146
 Doumergue, President, 168
 Dreyfus Case, 25, 84, 153
 Driscoll, Mr. J., 270-2
 Duhamel, M., 149
 Düsterberg, Colonel, 196-7
 Dyer, General, 101

 Ebert, President, 17, 171, 173, 176, 186
 Eden, Mr. Anthony, 137-8, 224-6, 247-8, 250, 256, 258, 260, 279
 Edward VII, 62, 76
 Edward VIII, 242
 Ehrhardt, Captain, 177
 Eisner, Kurt, 98
 Entente, Anglo-French, 62-7
 Entente, The Little, 232, 268
 Eritrea, 214, 220, 227
 Ernst, F., 266, 313
 Erzberger, Matthias, 183
 Espartero, General, 236
 Ethiopia, 28, 62, 69, 125, 127, 214-33, 254, 273, 286, 297, 319

 Fashoda, 48, 61
 Federation of British Industries, 294, 296
 Fehrenbach, H., 173, 179
 Ferry Jules, 46, 84 </p> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Index

- Financial Times*, 124
 Finland, 106, 291, 303, 322
 Flandin, M., 165, 280
 Foch, Marshal, 157, 320
 France, Anatole, 25, 116, 141
 Francis Joseph, Emperor, 82-3
 Franco, General Francisco, 122-8, 130, 134, 145, 228
 Fritsch, General von, 258

 Galliéni, General, 154
 Gandhi, M. K., 237, 306
 Garvin, Mr. J. L., 127, 251, 262
 Geddes, Sir Eric, 118
 Gessler, Otto, 179, 186, 191
 Gestapo, The, 94, 259, 282, 314
 Gladstone, W. E., 115, 117
 Goded, General, 239
 Goethe, J. W., 53
 Göring, General, 129, 130, 230, 263, 281
 Grandi, Signor, 250
 Greece, 51, 106, 207, 289
 Grevy, Jules, 84, 146, 148
 Grey, Sir Edward (Viscount of Fallodon), 66, 81, 85
 Gröner, General
 Guadalajara, Battle of, 248

 Haldane, Lord, 23, 79-80, 85
 Halifax, Lord, 136, 227, 256-8, 262, 270, 277-8, 286
 Hall, Mr. D. 225
 Hardie, Keir, 23, 117
 Haushofer, General, 267
 Heine, Heinrich, 109
 Heines, 313
 Helfferich, Dr. Karl, 181
 Henderson, Arthur, 117, 163, 206
 Henderson, Sir Neville, 262-5, 282
 Henlein, Konrad, 256, 269, 273-4
 Henriot, M., 167
 Herriot, M. Edouard, 158, 161, 165, 169, 198

 Hess, Rudolph, 257
 Hindenburg, Marshal von, 107, 171-3, 187-202
 Hindenburg, Oscar, 197
 Hoare, Sir Samuel, 136, 141, 224, 228, 231, 270, 286
 Hoare-Laval Peace Plan, 138, 141, 225-7, 274, 282, 285, 313
 Hoetzendorff, Conrad von, 82
 Hohenlohe, Prince, 71
 Hohenlohe-Langenburg, Prince Max, 274
 Hohenlohe-Waldenburg, Princess, 268
 Holland, 34, 49, 88, 267, 303, 322
 Hore-Belisha, Mr. 137
 Horthy, Admiral, 97
 Hudson, Mr. R. S., 137
 Hugenberg, Alfred, 191-2, 211
 Hyndman, H. M., 27

 India, 20-1, 24, 34, 39-40, 47-8, 69, 150, 162, 305-6, 325
 Inge, Rev. W. R., 251
 Ireland, 85-6, 98, 104, 162, 304-8.

 Jaksch, Herr, 265
 James, William, 107
 Joffre, Marshal, 154
 Johnson, Dr. S., 53

 Kahr, Dr. von, 183-5
 Kapp, Captain, 173-4
 Kapp *putsch*, 17, 171, 173-4, 177, 184, 187
 Kellogg Pact, 162, 207-8
 Kiderlen Wachter, 72
 Kipling, Rudyard, 47
 Kirdorf, 211
 Kirov, 25
 Kluck, General von, 310
 Krupps, 42, 44

 Lambie, Mr. T. A., 227
 Lansbury, Mr. G., 316

Europe's Dance of Death

- Lansdowne, Lord, 64
 Lateran Treaty (1929), 216, 287
 Laval, M. Pierre, 163, 168-9, 206, 221, 224, 231
 League of Nations, 105, 156, 161-2, 207-8, 222-6, 228, 288, 321
 League of Nations Union, 222
 Lenin, 142
 Lessing, G., 53
 Liebknecht, Karl, 98
 Lindbergh, Colonel, 279
 Litvinof, Maxim, 276-9, 288-9
 Lloyd George, Mr. D., 23, 66, 74, 85, 117, 132, 156
 Löbe, President, 201
 Locarno Pact, 161, 186, 230
 Londonderry, Lord, 128-30, 251, 316
 Loubet, President, 146, 153
 Ludendorff, Marshal Erich von, 85, 173, 185-8, 200
 Lüttwitz, General, 173
 Luxembourg, Rosa, 98
 Lytton, Lord, 138
- Macaulay, T. B., 30
 MacDonald, J. Ramsay, 117, 123, 125, 129, 161
 MacDonald, Mr. M., 136
 McKenna, Mr. Reginald, 182
 MacMahon, Marshal, 145-7, 171
 Malvy, M., 155
 Marx, Karl, 92, 183
 Marx, Wilhelm, 179, 186, 193
 Matteotti, 97
Mein Kampf, 261, 275
 Meissner, Otto, 189
 Millàn Astray, General, 239
 Millerand, President, 146, 155, 157, 164
 Mola, General, 239, 241
 Molotov, 289
 Morel, E. D., 27, 52
 Morley, Lord, 85, 207
- Morocco, 38, 61-6, 254
 Mosley, Sir Oswald, 134
 Mowrer, Mr. Edgar, 176
 Müller, General, 184
 Müller, Hermann, 176, 192
 Munich Agreement, 125, 127, 278-82, 285, 291, 296-8
- Napoleon Bonaparte, 26-7, 32, 53
 Napoleon III, 34, 46, 170
 Neurath, Baron von, 259, 263
 Nevinston, Mr. H. W., 27, 52
 Nicholas II, 82
 Nicolson, Mr. H., 310
 Nicolson, Sir Arthur, 65
 Non-Intervention Pact, 244, 270, 280
 Nordau, Max, 41
 Norman, Mr. Montagu, 296
 Noske, 171
- Observer*, 127, 228
 O'Donnell, 236
 Ogpu, The, 314
 Ottawa Agreement, 59
- Paine, Thomas, 209
 Palmerston, Lord, 34
 Panama Scandal, 84, 147
Panther, The, 65-7
 Papen, Franz von, 18, 165, 191, 198-202
 Peace Ballot, 138
 Phalangists, 236
 Picquart, Colonel, 153
 Pius X, Pope, 153
 Pius XI, Pope, 212, 215-16, 233
 Planetta, 259
 Plymouth, Lord, 246
 Poincaré, President, 81, 154-5, 163
 Poland, 89, 106, 134, 219, 249, 286-90, 299-300, 313
 Portuguese East Africa, 52, 77, 217
 Preis, Dr. Jaroslav, 281

Index

- Protocol, Geneva, 161
 Prim, General, 145
Punch, 12, 283

 Queipo de Llano, General, 241

 Rapallo, German Russian Treaty, 190
 Rasputin, 82
 Ras Gugsä, 225
 Rathenau, Walter, 18, 37, 98, 183, 190
 Rauschning, H., 266-7
 Requetés, 236
 Ribbentrop, Herr von, 30, 230, 244, 251, 258, 260, 278, 285
 Ribot, M., 155
 Rivera, Primo de, 97, 145, 235
 Roberts, Lord, 80
 Rohan, Duc de, 155
 Röhm, Ernst, 19, 185, 199, 202, 313
 Rohrbach, Dr. 74
 Rolland, Romain, 53
 Rothermere, Lord, 273-4, 280-1
 Roumania, 50, 234
 Rouvier, M., 65
 Rupprecht, Prince, 185

 Sagasta, Señor, 62
 Salisbury, Lord, 187, 222
 Sanjurjo, General, 239
 Sapru, Sir Tej Bahadur, 256
 Sarraut, M., 166
 Sassoon, Mr. Siegfried, 89
 Scandinavia, 49, 81, 88, 219, 300
 Schacht, Dr. Hjalmar, 181, 295-6
 Scheidemann, Philip, 173, 179
 Schleicher, General Kurt von, 19, 165, 190, 196-7, 258
 Schneider, 159
 Schulenburg, Count, 290
 Schuschnigg, Dr. von, 258-9, 278
 Seeckt, General Hans von, 174, 179, 185, 190-1, 287, 290

 Selassie, Haile, Emperor of Ethiopia 214, 219-21
 Serrano, 145, 236
 Seyss-Inquart, Dr., 258-9, 265
 Shaw, Mr. G. B., 16, 23, 305
 Simon, Sir John, 85, 135, 137, 195, 207, 231, 270, 286
 Simons, W., 176
 Smallbones, Consul-General, 100
 Snowden, Lord, 117, 125
 Sotelo, Calvo, 219, 241
 Spain, 21, 26, 34, 49, 51, 62-4, 68, 88, 99, 150, 152, 178, 210, 234-50, 299, 309
 Spartacist Movement, 97, 171
 Stalin, J., 25, 142, 237, 240, 288, 313
 Stanhope, Lord, 136
 Stavisky, affair, 166-9
 Stein, Baron von, 174
 Steed, Mr. Wickham, 275
 Stimson, Mr. Henry, 207
 Strasser, Gregor, 199
 Streit, Mr. Clarence K., 322-4
 Stresemann, Gustav, 18, 163, 184-6, 189-92, 205-6
 Sudeten Germans, 263, 269, 273
 Suez Canal, 37, 74, 159
 Switzerland, 49, 81, 322

 Tangier, 64, 182, 212
 Tannenberg, battle of, 187, 201
 Tardieu, M., 64, 164, 193, 195, 198
 Tavs, Dr., 255, 257-8
 Tellini, General, 212
 Tennyson, Lord Alfred, 24, 32
 Thälmann, Ernst, 188, 196-7
 Thiers, L., 146, 177
 Thomas, Mr. J. H., 125, 132
 Thyssen, Herr Hugo, 194, 296
Times, The, 66, 128, 181, 231, 255, 275
 Tirpitz, Admiral von, 72, 85, 188
 Treitschke, Heinrich von, 45, 59, 175, 209

Europe's Dance of Death

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Treviranus, 191 | White, Mr., American Ambassador, 65 |
| Tripoli, 69, 101, 214, 217, 250 | Whitehead, Dr. A. N., 30 |
| Trotsky, M. Léon, 92, 97, 142, 237, 289 | Wiedemann, Captain, 273 |
| Tunis, 68-9, 216, 297 | Wilhelm II, Kaiser, 16, 57, 64, 75-9, 173, 177, 186, 266 |
| Turkey, 14, 38, 49, 51, 62, 73-5, 97, 107, 289 | Wilson, Daniel, 148 |
| | Wilson, Sir Arnold, 246 |
| Versailles, Treaty of, 49, 171-4, 178-9, 182, 191, 214, 230, 255, 260, 269, 315, 320 | Wilson, Sir Henry, 103 |
| Victoria, Queen, 47-8 | Wilson, Sir Horace, 256, 275-6 |
| Vogue, Marquis de, 159 | Wilson, President Woodrow, 173, 320 |
| Washington Naval Conference (1921), 78 | Wirth, Dr. Josef, 18, 176-9 |
| Weimar Constitution, 172, 182, 194, 197 | |
| Wells, Mr. H. G., 23 | Young Plan, The, 162-3, 191-2 |
| Wels, Otto, 201 | Yorck, General, 54 |
| Werth, Mr. Alexander, 280, 297 | |
| Westarp, Count, 191 | Zetland, Marquess of, 136 |
| | "Zinoviev Letter," 121-2, 162, 164, 277 |

OVERLEAF

*particulars of publications
of similar interest
issued by*



GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD
LONDON: 40 MUSEUM STREET, W.C.1
CAPE TOWN: 73 ST. GEORGE'S STREET
TORONTO: 91 WELLINGTON STREET WEST
BOMBAY: 15 GRAHAM ROAD, BALLARD ESTATE
WELLINGTON, N.Z.: 8 KINGS CRESCENT, LOWER HUTT
SYDNEY, N.S.W.: AUSTRALIA HOUSE, WYNYARD SQUARE

The Three Dictators

by Frank Owen

Illustrated. La. Cr. 8vo. 7s. 6d.

Frank Owen, the editor of the *Evening Standard*, brings within the compass of a single volume the life-stories of the three men who, by their amazing personalities and political sagacity, have come to hold within their hands the whole destiny of the civilized world: Mussolini, Stalin, and Hitler. All three are of humble origin, sons respectively of a blacksmith, an impoverished bootmaker, and a petty official. Two were destined by their mothers for priesthood. All have lived the lives of outcasts and prisoners and fugitives, and all have known the deepest poverty. They have much in common in their temperaments and experience, but they have differences too. Frank Owen makes the differences and the likenesses vividly clear.

These three portraits, carefully linked, are masterpieces of concise and dramatic writing. The subjects' own words are dexterously welded into the narrative. A book of first-rate readability.

Hitler's Route to Bagdad

by Barbara Ward, the Hon. Barbara Buckmaster, Clare Hollingworth, Vandeleur Robinson, Lilo Linke
With an Introduction by Leonard Woolf

Maps drawn by J. F. Horrabin

Demy 8vo. 10s. 6d.

Neutrals may well play as important a part in the present war as the combatant Powers. The Balkan countries with their valuable supplies of food and raw materials and their situation on the Black Sea and the Dardanelles, are most important pawns on the diplomatic chessboard. Wartime developments in this area can only be understood in the light of political, social, economic, and racial background in each country. What of *Rumania* with its large German, Jewish, Magyar, and Ukrainian minorities, and its oil and wheat; of *Yugoslavia*, with its own minority problem and its important metal resources; and of *Greece*, with its important strategic position on the Mediterranean? What will be the rôle of *Bulgaria* with its revisionist aims and bitter memories of the last war, and of *Turkey*, an entirely reconstituted nation and now our ally?

In this book authoritative writers treat each of these countries in turn; examine their internal situation and problems, their foreign relations, the attempts of Germany to gain economic and political control, and suggest what steps should be taken to counter the expansion of Nazi influence.

New Tyrannies for Old

by Lord Snell, Wickham Steed, Major-General A. C. Temperley, Geneviève Tabouis, R. H. S. Crossman, Rt. Hon. Herbert Morrison, M.P.

Cr. 8vo. 5s.

"The historical parts of the book are as enlightening as the section dealing with the present and the grim possibilities of the future is provocative, disturbing, and hortatory. The book deserves study by all who are concerned about the way the world is going."—*Sheffield Star*

The German People versus Hitler

by Heinrich Fraenkel

Demy 8vo. 10s. 6d.

In this book the author shows that the forces of German opposition (reaching from the extreme political Right to the extreme Left) once they are sufficiently unified, are bound to smash Hitlerism, and that Democracy's most powerful ally in the fight against Hitlerism is the German people.

From the beginning of hostilities the existence and strength of the opposition within Germany has been manifest, and it will go from strength to strength if the British and French High Command continue and intensify their efforts in dropping leaflets—not bombs—and appeal direct to the German people in their fight against Hitlerism.

The book is also a magnificent survey and interpretation of Hitler and Hitlerism. But it is primarily occupied in describing in detail the growth of the underground opposition, its activities and methods and achievements, from the moment of Hitler's accession to power to the early weeks of the war. Of special interest are details of illegal printed propaganda, the illegal radio, the make-up of political "cells," and Himmler's own for keeping down the German people during wartime. Fraenkel's conclusion is that Hitler's days are now numbered. The author is an active member of the German opposition in Britain.

Six Years of Hitler: The Jews under the Nazi Régime

by G. Warburg

With an Introduction by Neville Laski, K.C. La. Cr. 8vo. 7s. 6d.

Written by an expert, this is the first factual compilation of the many methods adopted by Nazi Germany against the Jews. Based exclusively on official German publications or the most reliable British reports, the book shows how at first comparatively mild measures were adopted, and how the screw was then systematically tightened until the last Jew or "non-Aryan" was driven out of the Civil Service, the professions, the cultural life, the schools and universities, and the field of trade and commerce, and how at the same time the propaganda machine of the régime was used to degrade the Jewish community and to turn the Jews into pariahs without rights of any kind. The final chapter exposes the connection between the Nazi and anti-Semitic world propaganda and the problem of forced emigration. The source of every statement of fact is given in an appendix.

"Here is a complete account of the treatment of the Jews in Germany since Hitler came to power in 1933. It is a book of facts, grim facts, whose authenticity is beyond question. . . . No Christian person can read it without great moral indignation and a revulsion of feeling against Nazism."—*The Christian World*

Dangerous Thoughts

by Lancelot Hogben

Demy 8vo. 8s. 6d.

Author of *Mathematics for the Million*, *Science for the Citizen*, etc.

These extremely witty and challenging essays on the history of science, on teaching methods, and on current political and social questions are unified by the common theme that modern science has created the possibility of a collectivist economy of leisure and plenty for all; that its realization demands far-reaching changes in the content of education and wholesale rejection of the mental habits of an age when the price of the comfort and culture of the few were the poverty of the many.

"Professor Hogben's book consists of a series of essays and addresses. All are united by the single thread of Professor Hogben's preoccupation with the problem, how can society be so organized that the vast increase of potential benefit accruing from the advance of science may be made available for the amelioration of human life?"—*The Spectator*

The Danger of Being a Gentleman

by Harold J. Laski

La. Cr. 8vo. 7s. 6d.

Author of *A Grammar of Politics*, *Democracy in Crisis*, etc.

Civilized order survives on its merits—so a contemporary philosopher has said—though the merits at present seem perilously near obliteration. But there are very few who can appreciate the merits of civilized order as clearly as Professor Laski or who can criticize its weaknesses with so much vigour and devastating clarity.

This volume deals mainly with the issues of contemporary politics and law in Europe and America. It is unified by the conception of democracy as a society of equals sharing in a common good. All of Professor Laski's many readers will want this book.

"This set of eight lectures by Professor Laski are written with real understanding because he appreciates his merits in the past. The clarity and the fairness with which Professor Laski presents his arguments are a model of political writing."—*The New Statesman and Nation*

Democracy Up-to-Date

by Sir Stafford Cripps

Cr. 8vo. 2s.

The object of this short book is to explain the defects in our democratic system as it works, or fails to work, at the present time, and to suggest new methods by which we can adapt our democracy to the very rapidly changing economic and political circumstances in which it has to operate.

The challenge to world democracy is not merely the challenge of armed force but is, too, the challenge to create and develop an efficient system of government which can provide for the common people those things which they need and which nowadays they expect in the way of standard of life, health, and happiness.

Unless we are prepared to adapt our traditional methods to modern circumstances, our democracy and freedom cannot survive.

All prices are net

LONDON: GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD.

